ROD & Custom

DECEMBER, 1953 25c

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RESTYLED MERCURY

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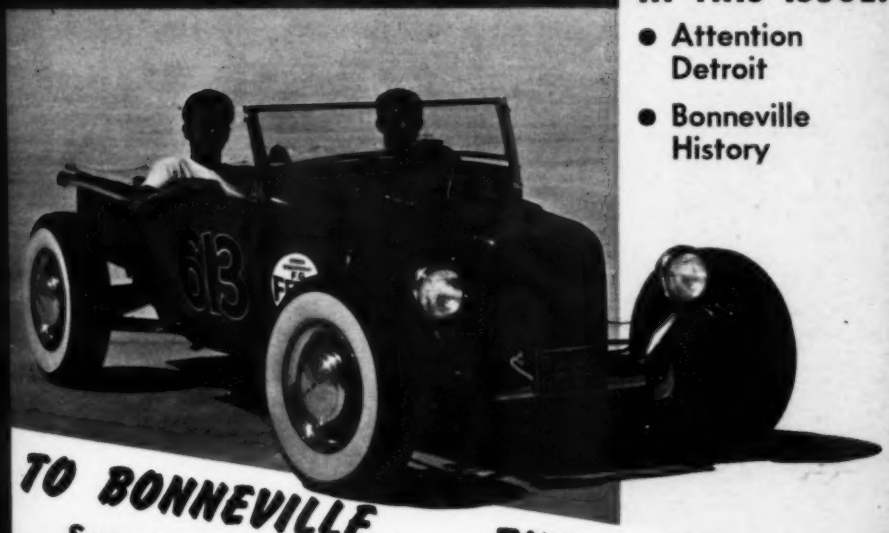

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editorial . . .

As you no doubt have heard, the Bonneville Speed Trials have come and gone once again. You have undoubtedly read in the newspapers of the great success of the amateur speed enthusiasts and of the fantastic speeds they attained during the first week of September. But just in case you might have missed an accounting of this great annual event, ROD & CUSTOM gives a general run-down of the records broken and, in addition, takes you to Bonneville the hard way — in a competition coupe towed to the salt flats by a *roadster*, no less!

Don't miss the trials and tribulations of the 700 mile trip across the broiling California desert, across the burning wastelands of Nevada and Arizona during the latter part of August where the mercury climbs above the 100 mark earlier in the year and stays there for many months and, finally, northward through Utah to the Great Salt Lake Basin where the sun shines so brightly that it is difficult to see without the protection of dark glasses. Yes, ROD & CUSTOM once again takes you on an unusual trip in an unusual conveyance and, in addition, gives you the story *behind* the Bonneville story plus an article on the little known facts of the *history* of the Salt Flats and the immediate surrounding area. All in all, this is ROD & CUSTOM's first attempt at covering the Bonneville Speed Trials and it is hoped that you have as much fun reading it as we had in writing it.

* * * * *

Many times in the past we have given you helpful tips on various ideas which, we hope, have helped you to clearly understand how to do a particular thing to your car without having to rely on an outside source which, as is usually the case, runs into a considerable amount of time and money. From your numerous letters we have determined that this type of article is gratefully received and an indication is given that a continuation of "How To Do It" articles is definitely in order. To help us help you, we give every letter addressed to our Technical Tips department special attention hoping that something unusual will turn up that will be of general interest to the remainder of our readers. In this way we are able to determine just what the average reader wants to know and, if possible, we follow through on it. Take the "Do It Yourself" article in the November issue, for example. A reader sent us his idea for converting a Chevrolet trunk latch to mechanical, remote control operation. The idea seemed to be sound and easily workable so we tried it and found, much to our satisfaction, that it worked without a hitch and, in addition, that only a minimum amount of time was required to complete the installation. Therefore, we felt that the idea was worth passing along to you — so it was.

In the future we shall have additional articles along these same lines — either pertaining to Rods or Customs — and, so that you know the idea has been tried by us and the feature considered acceptable, it shall bear the new ROD & CUSTOM Recommendation Seal which, incidentally, was introduced last month with a notable lack of appropriate fanfare.

Whenever you see this seal heading an article, feel secure in knowing that the idea has been successfully approved, can be done in a reasonably short length of time and requires little or no outside help or special tools. The ROD & CUSTOM Recommendation Seal signifies Truth, Quality and Complete Satisfaction.

ROD & Custom

Vol. 1, No. 8 — DECEMBER, 1953

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Correspondence

BLUE CHROME?

I'm very interested in the car on your September cover. I'd like to know how the owner of the Chevy managed to attain the blue chrome on his front bumper and grille. Did he take the chrome to a gunsmith? Honest, I'm serious, I like that blue color. I am a custom car fan and the blue chrome simply "sends me". Can you tell me how the owner got it that way?

Stan Pisnavich — Los Angeles, Cal.

• *If someone could introduce color to chrome they would stand a good chance of making a sizeable fortune over night. Sorry, Stan, the blue tint on Bob Borst's front bumper and grille is merely reflection from the sky.*

WE'RE STILL HEARING ABOUT THE "SQUIRRELS".

We wish to comment on your Editorial concerning the "squirrels". We think that there would be fewer "squirrels" and less accidents if the police and the rodders cooperated a little more with each other. As it is, there is no cooperation but we feel that the rodders would be happy to get together with officials if given half a chance and if the police showed interest in them other than pouncing on them at every opportunity.

Jack Bergan
Jim Tustin — Philadelphia, Penna.

• *That used to be the case but, gradually, more and more club groups are being helped by various officials, thank goodness.*

CUSTOM SHOP QUERY

I am a reader of your magazine — I might point out a recent reader — and so far have been unable to find any information as to the location of a *good* custom shop in the San Francisco, Berkeley or Oakland area.

I have a 1941 Lincoln Continental on which I would like to have some work done; the chrome re-chromed, a little dechroming and a paint job.

I would greatly appreciate what ever information you might be able to give me concerning a quality shop — one which does an *excellent* job of chroming, customizing and painting and who are not robbers.

Talbert Pederson — Mill Valley, Calif.

• *There are several good shops in your area but I believe you'll find that they all send their chrome work to a specialty shop — I know of no body shop that does their own plating. Among the quality shops in your area are Joe Bailon of San Leandro and Vann's of Oakland.*

"WE'RE FLATTERED" DEPT.

I want to congratulate you on your R & C magazine. The smaller size is convenient and easy to handle. Keep up the good work, which has been your policy with HOP UP, and I'm sure R & C will be a hit.

William Clashie — Syracuse, New York

Just thought I'd drop you a line to tell you how much I enjoy R & C magazine. I want to thank everyone who is responsible for making this book possible for me, and for everyone else, to read. Thanks, thanks and more thanks!

Terry Joe Baker — Torrance, Calif.

I have been reading R & C ever since it came out last May and have enjoyed it very much. No matter what anyone else says about it I like it just the way it is, pinups or not.

I am keeping each issue for future reference. I am only 14 now but hope to have a Rod someday. I particularly like your technical articles for they are educational as well as of general interest.

Bill Hagerman — Monterey Park, Calif.

• *Thanks, fellas.*

RESTYLING COST

Could you please tell me what the charge was for the body work on your "Chevy Of The Month" for September? I have just purchased a '50 Chevy standard coupe and plan to have it worked on but before I start I would like to have an idea of the prices.
Clark Spencer Corpus Christi, Texas

• *Like all work involving little more than straight labor, prices vary in different sections of the country. However, average prices should run something like this:*

Frenched headlights	*$45.00*
Bull nose hood and alter to fit grille	*$40.00*
Grille parts and mold deflector	*$48.00*
Remove rear fender trim	*$35.00*
Remove deck hardware	*$25.00*
Remove license lights	*$ 6.00*
Mount taillights in guards	*$10.00*
Fill original taillight holes	*$12.00*
Mold rear deflector to body	*$ 8.00*
Remote control deck latch	*$25.00*
Lowering, front and rear	*$15.00*
Dual exhausts	*$45.00*
Upholstery	*$250.00*
Paint	*$85.00*
Total	*$649.00*

Remember, this is only an approximation of prices. Also, there would be additional charges for whatever extra parts were used but the price would be lessened by whatever work was done by the owner.

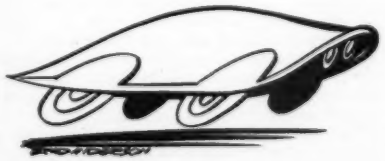
WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

Only a few short months ago in HOP UP you were loudly and strongly voicing your opinion against cars with the "motorboat look", against cars lowered so drastically that even the slightest driveway slopes became impassable, and against cars which had been chopped sufficiently to make visibility zero. The last two features are trademarks of nearly all Barris Kustoms.

Now, what do I see in R & C? A feature story praising the beauty of Barris cars. Granted that the brothers Sam and George can do wonders with a piece of metal, but the fact remains that what you once frowned upon you are now in favor of.

In a recent issue of R & C, I noticed the coverage of a car that closely resembles a turtle, with all the grace and styling of that cumbersome animal. I once read that a customizer must not just *change* the appearance of a stock car but must *improve* upon the original design. If that particular car is an improvement I will re-consult Webster.

I thoroughly agreed with you when you stated once that Ron Dunn's sectioned Ford coupe was one of the finest cars of the year. There is certainly NO resemblance to that beautifully styled car and to the turtle mentioned above. Why the reversal of opinion?
James Morris Pasadena, Calif.



• *As you may or may not have noticed, James, our masthead is not the same as that of the smaller sized HOP UP of a year or so ago. The beliefs of one Editorial staff are not an indication of the beliefs of another, true? However, most customizers (whether it be Valley Custom, Bill Babb, Ayala, Barris, Bailon, or Cerney, to name a few) do only what their customers dictate. Therefore, though a shop may be strictly against drastic lowering or other unnecessary modifications to a car, they must follow the directions of the customer if they want to stay in business. We are by no means partial to any single custom shop, we only show pictures of cars in which we think the majority of our readers will be interested.*

MORE ABOUT CUSTOMIZING

We have a '50 Chevy and would like to customize it. What would be the cheapest way to do it yet have something that looked different? If any of your readers could give us any ideas we would be thankful.
D. W. Pahl 123 S. Main, Bellevue, Mich.

• *Many good ideas may be had by referring to our "Chevy Of The Month" in the September issue and the prices for the work can be found above. If anyone would like to help Mr. Pahl further, his address is reprinted above.*

NO COMPLAINTS

A few months ago my brother and I received a complimentary copy of R & C through the mail and we haven't missed an issue since. Just keep it in its small size.

My brother has a '46 Ford coupe which is dechromed completely, lowered six inches and has the exhaust tips protruding through the rear fenders. Thanks again for the fine magazine.
Billy and Alvin Moore Big Spring, Texas

• *Thank you for your compliments, we like to hear nice things however, uncomplimentary letters also interest us, they sometimes lead to the discontinuing of articles and features that are not as well received as we expected. Drop us a photo of the Ford, maybe we can use it in Readers Customs.*

Situated upon the boundless surface of the salt flats, Charles Sugden's A pickup represents a picturesque sight. Bright red car turned 130 mph.

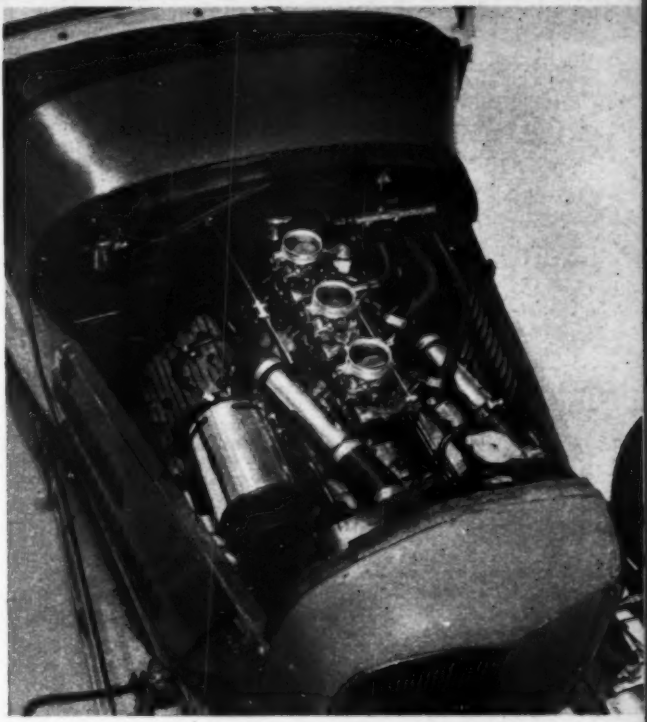
SALT SC

Photos by Poole

GRACING OUR cover this month is a strikingly beautiful little '29 A pickup built by Charles Sugden of Salt Lake City, Utah. Working on the car in his spare time over a period of two years he succeeded in completing it just in time to take part in the recent Bonneville speed trials.

Not being strictly a competition type car, many of the "Build-them-to-go-not-to-show" enthusiasts were visibly shaken when it succeeded in blasting down the long straightaway on the salt flats at 130.62 mph. While this time fell short of the top time in the C Modified Roadster class of over 190 mph, it was far better than other competing cars not built for all-out racing.

Starting out with nothing more than an ancient Model A pickup truck of the type so popular, during the past 24 years, with gardeners, Charles went to work removing the years' accumulation of dirt, rust and scale. This required considerable time since every conceivable part of the car was so affected. During the rejuvenating period the car was entirely disassembled and all of the parts not to be used later were discarded.



Modified engine features equipment by Edelbrock, Howard, Harman and Collins. With help of a friend, owner Sugden spent 2 years on the car.

CORCHER

. . . at Bonneville.

This included almost everything excepting the body itself and the frame.

The rebuilding procedure was started off by the boxing of the frame. That is, welding a fourth side to the existing C-shape of the rails. This nearly doubled the strength of the frame and successfully eliminated the possibility of up and down twisting action.

The Model A center crossmember was removed and one from a later V8 substituted in its place to carry the engine-to-be. Being thus completed, all of the unusable holes in the frame were filled to present as neat an appearance as possible.

The body received a very careful going over and all the unwanted holes and openings were dutifully eliminated as were the collection of small dents and nicks that the car had collected over the years. With the body reduced to an empty shell, the flooring was cut loose and welded back in a higher position. When replaced on the chassis, the body turned out to be channeled the thickness of the frame which, in this case, results in a drop of approximately 4½ inches.

The front suspension consists of a '32 Ford

axle which has been dropped and filled. Hydraulic brakes were installed to overcome the stopping problems encountered with the mechanical type brakes. The radius rods, of the split type, were fabricated from tubing and fasten to the frame at their rearward extremities with tie-rod fittings secured to a steel plate.

The rear axle assembly was taken from a '41 Ford containing a 3.27 to 1 ratio. Late Ford wheels mount 7.10 x 15 tires in the rear and 6.50 x 15 tires in front, all four being white sidewalls.

The engine compartment boasts a 59A block with a 3⅛" bore and a ¼" overstroke. Howard supplied one of his M14 cams while Edelbrock took care of the heads, intake manifold and the pistons. The dual ignition was built by Harman and Collins.

The exhaust headers were made by the owner who spent many hours laboriously fitting the piping into its proper position — no simple chore. The headers lead down to two "lakes plugs" below the body. When the plugs are capped, the exhaust is routed through two mufflers then up, just behind the body, to a point just below the top rail of the bed, then back along the bed to the folding tailgate.

With the running gear components of the pickup pretty well along at this stage of the game, work was turned, again, in the direction of the detail work — those little things that add so much.

The formed instrument panel houses four basic Stewart Warner instruments. The four dials indicate oil pressure, water temperature, fuel and amperes. In the center of the dash the handle for the fuel pressure pump can be seen. The amount of pressure in the tank is dutifully recorded on a separate gauge mounted just beneath the instrument panel.

The stock Model A steering assembly was discarded in favor of a later unit from a '36 Ford. The newer set-up results in more positive steering and causes the little car to be quickly responsive.

The handling qualities were assisted fur-

Hood is made in three sections. Quick access to engine is provided by snap locks on the top section. Center row of louvers faces forward to force cooling air into engine compartment.

ther by the adoption of tubular shock absorbers in the rear and Houdaille shocks in front.

Virtually every small piece of the car was sent to be chrome plated including the forward tubular crossmember, the headlights and brackets, front axle and attachments, engine accessories, windshield frame and exhaust pipes.

Further additions included the installation of '39 Ford taillights on either side of the tailgate-mounted license plate and the three piece hood with an adequate number of louvers. Upholstery included one tarpaulin to cover the pickup bed when it is not in use, and a second tarp to protect the seats from the Salt Lake City sun. The car may be driven in adverse weather for the cockpit-tarp can be separated behind the steering wheel by the use of a zipper.

Upon completion the car was singularly treated with a Matador Red lacquer job which, together with the chrome work and the white sidewall tires, presents a sight that attracts considerable attention whenever it is driven on the streets of Salt Lake City.

Bird's-eye view shows roomy cockpit with only a minimum of instruments fitted into dashboard.

With both tarpaulins in place, pickup is ready for adverse weather. Car can be driven with the covers in place by un-zipping area over the seat.

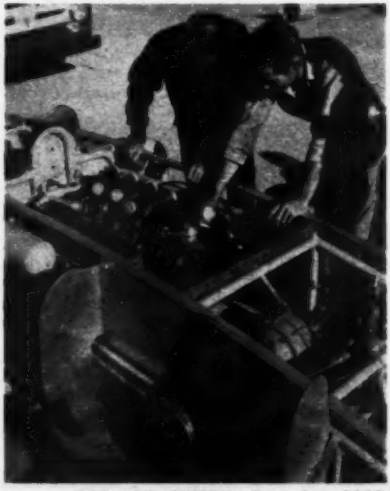
ARE THE Bonneville National Speed Trials filling the undisputable need for a National hot rod meet? We are asking this question because apparently many of the avid enthusiasts are beginning to wonder whither we are drifting.

Each year general interest in this event becomes directed more and more toward the multi-thousand dollar streamliners and less and less toward the slowly disappearing but familiar roadsters and coupes. Whether or not this situation is a desirable trend is certainly not to be decided on these pages. Nevertheless, it is felt that the situation bears some reviewing.

Hot rodding, since its inception many years ago, has never been looked upon as a hobby restricted primarily to wealthy sportsmen. In the past, the popular belief existed that it was everyone's sport. If you had a Ford roadster and a few dollars for speed equipment you could join the ranks of the hot rodders. How times have changed in the past few years! Now we are progressing into the heretofore "impossible" realm of the true aristocrats of speed. Craftsmanship, design and the capabilities of some of today's super streamliners rivals that of cars driven by the late John Cobb, Captain George Eyston, Major "Goldie" Gardner and the late Berndt Rosemeyer. If we progress as we have in the past then it will not be very long before these famous personages are placed behind us as

By Barney Navarro
Photos by Poole

The simplicity of the well-designed body of the Hooper-Brown streamliner entry ceases as the V8 engine receives a check with outer covering off.

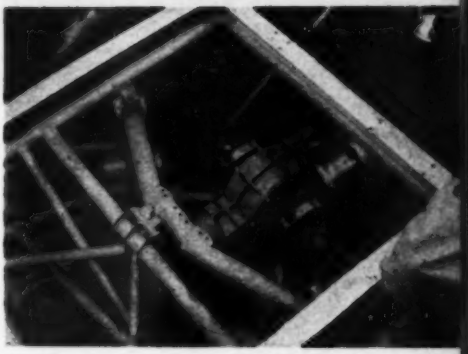


we go on to unknown reaches in the world of speed.

It is very evident that we cannot criticize the existence of the streamliners, for to do so would be the same as suggesting that we return to the horse and buggy days. However, on the other hand we cannot overlook the fact that their very existence detracts to a certain extent from all of the other classes of hot rods. One cannot label this condition as being an evil, for it undeniably exists in every form of competitive sport. A far greater number of people can name the fastest jet fighter plane than the fastest passenger airliner. Also, we can all agree that more sports fans can name the heavyweight boxing champ than can name the lightweight champ. In every field of endeavor the top class is the one that attracts the greatest attention. In the case of hot rodding, the fastest speed is all important while the method of attainment is, regretably, secondary.

Even among the ranks of the elite streamliner group we find the same disregard for the accomplishments of the so-called "little fellows". If a car equipped with a small, 91 cubic inch engine travelled at a speed of 150 miles an hour very few people would sit up and take notice, but watch what happens when a 600 cubic inch machine does 250 miles an hour. Conceivably, the only way that the 91 cubic inch engined car would receive as much publicity would be for it to travel as fast as the 600 cubic inch job.

Whether or not a streamliner is a hot rod in the true sense of the word as we have come to know it is another point open for discussion. Lately, all the definitions of the term "hot rod" have been rather loosely knit. Some of the definers completely neglect the type of chassis employed and state the engine is the all important factor. They feel that anything that is powered by a reworked stock American engine is a hot rod. Needless to say, the boys at Indianapolis will raise quite a fuss if a hopped up stock car engine makes the "500" program next Memorial Day and it receives the hot rod label.

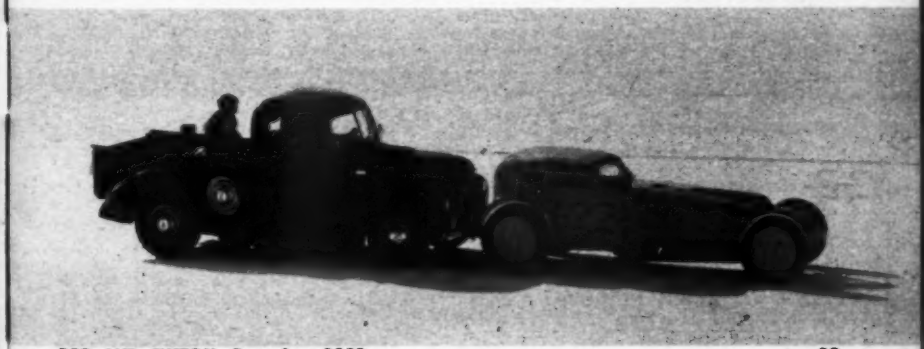


A closer look at the rear axle assembly of the Hooper-Brown car shows the ultimate in design resulting in the near perfection of handling.

We must not overlook the possibility of reduced attendance by roadster owners at future meets due to the great popularity of the streamliners. For the streamliners to replace the roadsters as far as their sheer numbers is concerned is very improbable. The cost of a well constructed, safe streamliner is considerably more than a well constructed roadster, so those that would like to reach for the stars will, in the majority, have to be content with just dreaming.

An outstanding example of design trend in the streamliner class can be observed by examining the Hooper-Brown entry (see illustrations). This car is by far the best constructed machine to ever appear in S.C.T.A. competition. It came as no surprise that this car received the coveted Engineering Achievement Award at Bonneville last September.

Dean Bachelor, the designer of the body,



Bonneville-bred, this car is powered by a dual engine combination, one Chrysler and one Ford.

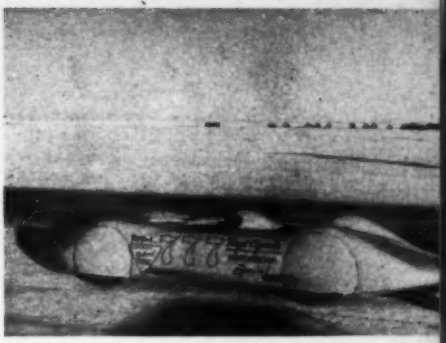
Underneath the beautiful exterior of Chrisman's modified coupe lies a chassis of quality workmanship. Bronze car turned better than 160 mph.

and Carl Fleischmann, the builder of the chassis, are both to be highly commended for their flawless workmanship and their uncompromising attitude. Nowhere can one find a place where they have "cut corners" to save time or make a certain task easier at the sacrifice of good construction practice. The car is even equipped with a DeDion rear suspension, a feature that greatly improves handling characteristics. Most builders are reluctant to believe that wheel suspension is of any great importance but we're glad to see that Hooper and Fleischmann had the right attitude. The net result is a machine that anyone would feel safe in while traveling at its record speed of 236.36 mph.

Another outstanding example of possible future trends in the Lakester Class is the Vesco-Dinkins entry. This car equipped with a 183 cubic inch Ford "four banger", fitted with a 4-port Riley head, turned up the utterly astonishing speed of 161 mph. during one leg of its record-run. It is not apparent, at first glance, that a rather unconventional use of a belly tank has taken place. Closer examination will disclose that the tank is mounted backwards with a fairing covering the front axle assembly. Provision was made for the windshield by altering the top contour of the tank.

Perhaps in the foregoing paragraphs the impression was created that only the streamliners receive the "all out" chassis treatment. One look at 200 MPH CLUB member Art Chrisman's 160 mph. coupe should certainly dispel this belief. This car is truly a beautiful piece of workmanship and good old Yankee ingenuity. Beneath the sleek exterior will be found a tubular frame that equals the flawless body work in skillful application and effort. Many will doubtless recognize the coupe's nose as the hood from a 1940 Ford,

Astounding speed (161 mph) of this four barrel was partially due to the strange body design.



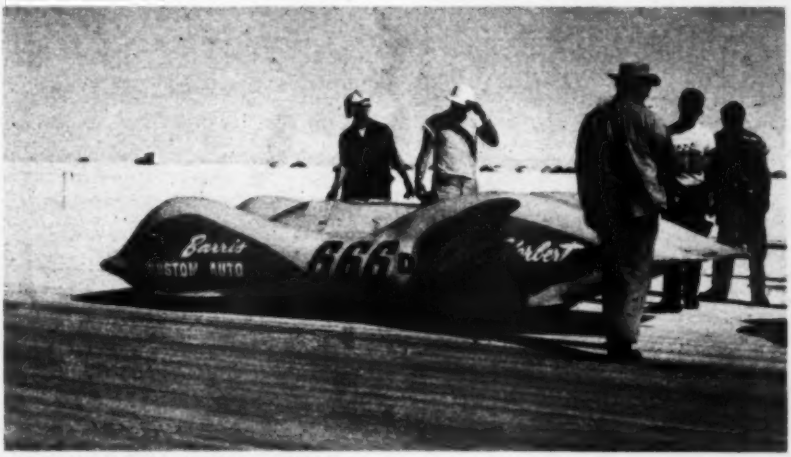
Fastest car in America is Kenz 255 mph streamliner. Is this an example of a true hot rod?

but if you will look closely it will be readily apparent that *two* hoods have been employed in the frontal body construction of this car. The second hood is mounted upside down to form the lower contour or belly pan portion.

The foregoing cars all illustrate a great deal of progress in design, progress that all of us like to see and deeply appreciate, but looking to the future we see many questions that must be answered. Will our future speed trials see fewer and fewer entrants as the super-machines get further and further ahead of the masses, or will the super-machines reach a staggering number and replace the roadsters? These and many similar problems arise as time passes but only the future can tell the answer.

Surprising speed of this sports car (203 mph) was due to both overall design and Chrysler V8.

Chet Herbert's "Beast 4" streamliner awaits the starting signal at entrance to the 9-mile course.




Photos by Poole

Restyled and RED

This Mercury Custom was built at night.

FROM BANGOR to San Diego and from Key West to Seattle there may be found, in almost any hamlet, town or city, one or more active members in the fast-growing ranks of custom-restyling enthusiasts. Not being content with the look-alikes that Detroit gives them, these people have taken it upon themselves to construct cars that resemble no others. Naturally, a certain number of them are "improvements" only in the eyes of the builder but the greater percentage incorporate custom-styling treatments that are peculiarly exclusive to the U. S. in design.

The majority of the custom cars are not necessarily limited to the major population centers but a good many of them can be found in these locales and in surrounding communities.

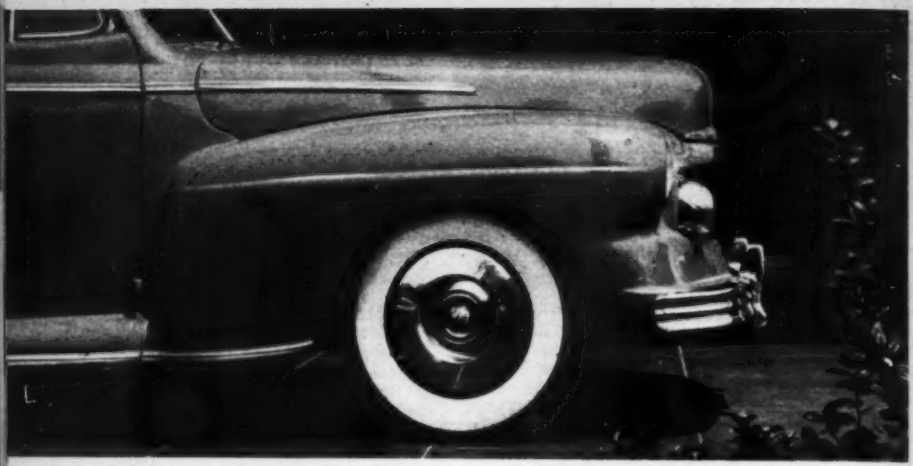
Southern California, which includes numerous towns and virtually millions of people, has long been noted for its number of restyled cars. This is probably due, in part, to the reasonably favorable year-round weather which does not cause as much damage to street and highway surfaces as it does in the East and Midwest. Too, cars are not subjected to long periods of wet or generally bad weather which plays havoc not only with paint and convertible tops but with metal body and chassis parts as well.

Taking a closer look at the map that makes up the generalized area of Southern California, we find communities, districts, villages and towns of all shapes and sizes. Just where to look for a custom car is no great problem. Take Bellflower, for example.

It lies a few, well-trafficked miles from the heart of Los Angeles proper in a southeasterly direction. Situated in a favorable position, climate-wise, many fine-car owners have called this town their home.

To cite a specific example, Dick Gnadt had an ordinary looking '46 Mercury convertible. Soon tiring of seeing what seemed like limit-

Frontal alterations to the '46 Merc include the frenched grille shell and headlights, Plymouth bumper, dechromed fenders and the filled hood.



less numbers of identical cars, Dick decided to have his car restyled and began casting about to find a body shop that would do both a quality job as well as a reasonably priced job. This led to complications. Dick had to have his car for transportation to and from his work, so the restyling would have to proceed a little at a time without the car being tied up. While similar situations have arisen in the past, Dick's is unusual because of the fact that he worked at *night*. Ever try to find a body man to work on *your* car between 3 o'clock in the afternoon and midnight?

After searching high and low, Dick ran across Bob Roberts, the foreman of the Lakewood Body Works in Bellflower. Bob agreed to do the work in the late afternoon and evening and, moreover, would pick up the car after Dick had arrived at his job, then deliver it back to Dick so that he could drive home at midnight.

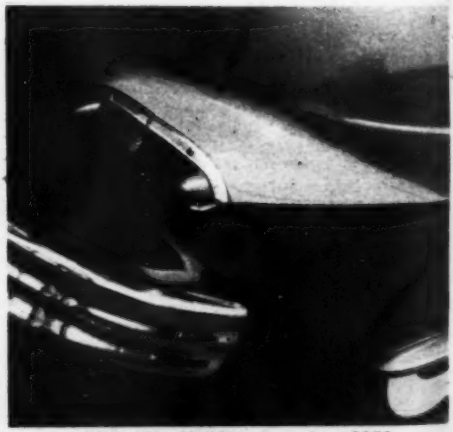
Bob started on Dick's car in May of '52 and gradually progressed with the work. The first operation called for reducing the windshield height by three inches — no simple matter because of the work involved with cutting the window glass moldings, reshaping them and sending them to be re-plated. Eventually, the particular project was completed and the headlights were next to receive attention. Again, work had to progress in stages since the car had to be driven at night and, naturally, the headlights had to remain operable. Eventually, though, this matter was out of the way so the remainder of the car began receiving its share of work.

Late Ford taillights are set in hand formed housings which, in turn, are leaded into fender. Rear bumper, like front, is from '49 Plymouth. Notice that gravel shield is leaded to the body.

Removal of fender chrome and the shortened hood strip give car uncluttered look. Front hubcaps are from a 1953 Cadillac. Mild lowering job serves the purpose of giving car a longer look but does not hamper riding & handling qualities.

Things went along like this for some time and Dick began seeing the gradual changes in his car. When the final coat of lacquer was sprayed on at last, and the finish rubbed out, Dick had the "different" looking car he had so long dreamed about.

Changes to the front included the frenching in of the stock Merc grille frame, the building of a new front gravel deflector, the installation of a modified '51 Ford grille, the removal of the stock parking lights, the



addition of a '49 Plymouth front bumper and the insertion of fog lights in the Ford grille.

The ornament and medallion were both removed from the hood of the convertible and the chrome side strip shortened to give the hood the illusion of being longer than it actually is.

The stock chrome stripping on the four fenders was removed and the holes filled. This was no minor matter since this model Mercury had two parallel chrome strips on each fender and each strip had a large number of clips to hold it in position. It was as though someone had blasted the fenders with a shotgun just before the filling operation was begun.

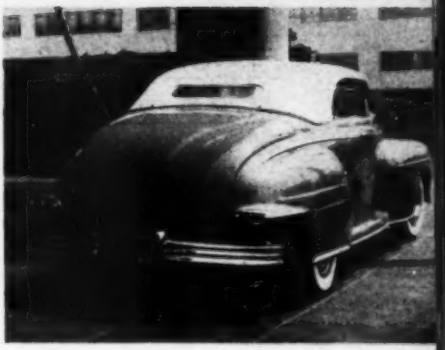
Dick wanted to use '51 Merc. skirts on the rear (the low skirts with the lip on the bottom) but Bob decided they wouldn't any more fit on the earlier model Merc. than they would, say, on a jeep. "If they won't fit, make 'em fit!" was the answer he received, so Bob set to work flattening the fenders from front to rear to rid them of their noticeable bulge. After much metal shrinking, the fenders were finally flattened to the extent that the skirts would fit, but — the wheel cutouts were too high to be covered completely. Therefore, it was necessary to add a section of body metal to the top of the wheel openings to bring them down to a level where they would be covered by the skirts. Too much work just for a set of skirts, you say? Not if you had your heart set on them as Dick Gnadt did.

With the rear fenders reshaped to the proper contour, they were then molded to the body which serves to give the rear of the car a one-piece look.

The deck lid was stripped of its ornamentation and the holes filled. Originally, the lid was unlatched electrically with the usual solenoid set-up but, after an unfortunate experience, the mechanism was exchanged for a hydraulically operated rig.

It seems that the battery ran down one day, and Dick was unable to convince the lid to open. Not being able to get into the trunk compartment by removing the rear seat (as is possible on some non-convertible cars), Dick had to resort to a large pry bar and a great deal of strength and elbow grease. The lid opened, finally, but not until the latch mechanism had given way and the lower latch plate practically torn from its mounting place. As a result, one of the automatic top units was placed in the trunk, secured in position, and the dash switch used to work the lid.

Because of this hazardous experience with non-stock electrical set-ups, Dick decided against having his doors push-button operated. He left the stock handles where they were, a wise move.

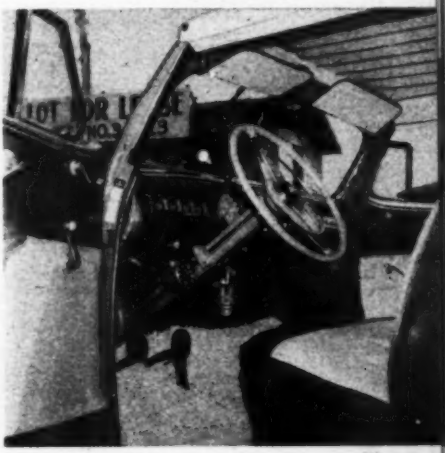


Taillights dominate rear view of car and serve to widen appearance of car. Trunk lid is opened through use of hydraulic convertible top unit.

The Mercury taillights were discarded — and the holes filled — in favor of '51 Ford light lenses. These were mounted in hand-formed housings which were, in turn, molded to the fenders. The installation greatly alters the rear of the car appearance-wise for it serves to widen the otherwise boxy, square look of the Mercury.

To finish off the back of the convertible, the gravel deflector was molded onto the body and a '49 Plymouth front bumper obtained to replace the stock bumper. The tips of the new bumper, though, didn't fit the lines of the Merc. as well as might be expected, so

(Continued on Page 65)



Dash is covered with leatherette to harmonize with interior colors. The upholstery was done by the Carson Top Shop. The top is removable.

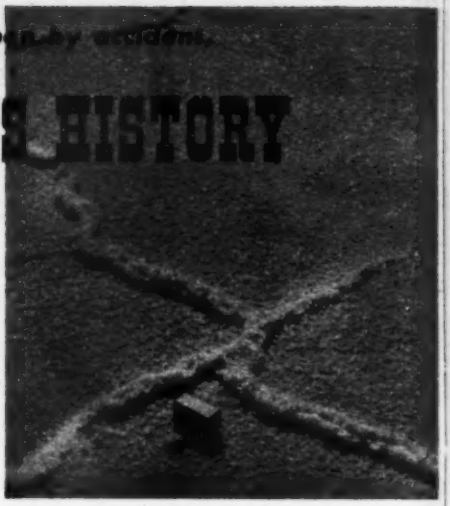
"Bonneville" just didn't happen by accident, there's a certain amount of . .

SALT FLATS HISTORY

LIKENED TO Central Equatorial Africa in both surface configuration and climate, the section of Utah known as the Great Basin lies barren and shimmering under the blazing sun and, for all practical purposes, is void of life. Centuries ago the entire basin was filled with water — 19,000 square miles of it. Geology books will tell you that long, long ago an upheaval of tremendous proportions took place and thrust the entire area skyward to its present height of nearly a mile above sea level.

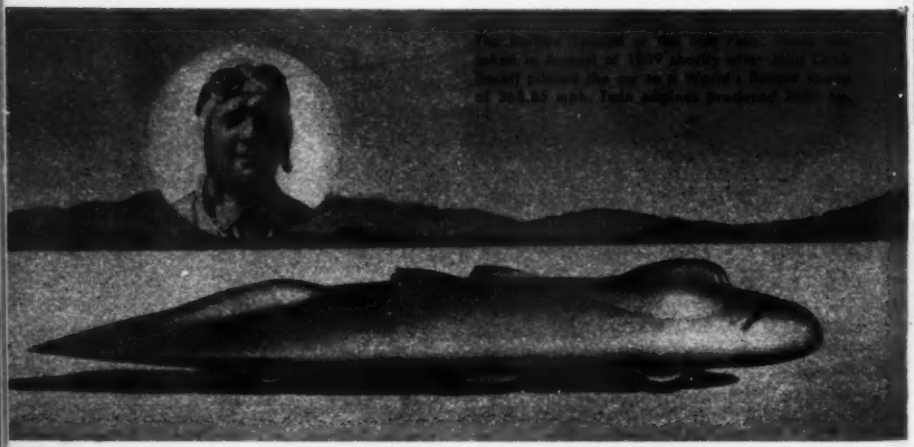
The water, trapped there by surrounding mountains, some of which towered 8,000 feet above the lake, began to recede slowly. During the course of many hundreds of years, evaporation took place and, with the small runoff of water through canyons and underground streams, the shores of the lake retreated. At one time the second largest lake within the continental limits of the United States, it had decreased to a shadow of its former self by the advent of the white man. Even so, the lake was tremendous by way of comparison with other existing lakes.

Imagine the wonderment of the first explorers who set foot in the Great Basin area when they gazed across the waters and tried to guess what lay on the other side. The far-distant Western side appeared to be studded with islands but, in reality, they were the tops of mountains situated even further west than the shores of the lake. Even at that relatively recent date in history the area covered by water was of much greater proportions than that which is now known as the Great Salt Lake.



Close up of salt surface of Bonneville. The ridges are caused by salt forced up through cracks. The size is indicated by a film box. Course must be scraped before runs are made.

Though men had known of the existence of the basin for a good number of years, it wasn't until early in the 1870's that much



exploration was attempted. While on an expedition for the U. S. Army, Captain Benjamin Bonneville came upon the lake, which occupied only a small portion of the ancient bed, and made mention of it in a subsequent report. He had been told that an earlier expedition had circumnavigated the lake in canoes but this he quite strongly doubted due to the apparent area covered by the waters. Not wishing to expose his men or himself to the unknown dangers that the lake might offer, he followed the shore line for awhile then turned northward heading into the country occupied at the time by the Crow Indian people.

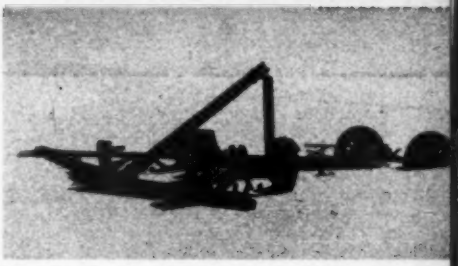
Because of the exploratory work done by Captain Bonneville in the general area surrounding the ancient lake bed, and the waters it contained at the time, his name has been given to that section of the Great Basin. In later years, the waters of the lake were referred to as the Great Salt Lake but the dry bed still retains the Captain's name.

* * * * * *

When racing against time for National and International records became popular in this country, shortly after the turn of the present century, it was natural that speed enthusiasts the world over would journey to Daytona Beach, Florida. The hard-packed sand along the Atlantic Coast at this point made possible a straight, relatively smooth run of several miles. For a good many years Daytona Beach was world famous as the fastest straightaway course.

Through the years, as speeds gradually increased, it became realized that the sandy course was not equal to the demands imposed upon it. That is, to provide a stretch of ground capable of supporting sustained speeds approaching, eventually, the long sought after 300 mph mark.

In March of 1935, Sir Malcom Campbell, driving his gigantic Bluebird Special, succeeded in raising the World's Unlimited Speed Record to 276.82 from 272.109. During the second leg of the record breaking run, the Bluebird struck an irregularity in the sand. The car bounced so hard that Sir Malcom's goggles dropped to a point where his vision was momentarily impaired. Only by taking one hand from the wheel and pushing the goggles to their former position was he able to see clearly. With a speed in the neighborhood of 300 feet per second, this move could have been disastrous but with Campbell's long experience of high speed driving he succeeded in controlling the car and bringing it, undamaged, to a stop.



Reminder of salt mining operations during the first World War. Ancient truck is gradually settling into the surface, will probably be gone from sight within the next fifty years.

As Campbell took off his goggles he announced to those present, and to the world in general, that Daytona Beach was finished as far as records for unlimited class cars were concerned.

Two years before, Salt Lake City's Ab Jenkins had pioneered the use of the Bonneville Salt Flats as a speed course. In the famous Mormon Meteor he had succeeded in attaining several world long-distance records by running his car in a great ten-mile-circumference circle.

Campbell's car was built primarily for straight runs and he correctly decided that if Bonneville offered an area large enough to support a ten mile circle then it should

Great, flat expanse is ideally suited to high speed racing. Line indicating the course drops from sight due to the curvature of the earth.

Large billboard, erected by General Petroleum, marks an entrance to the Bonneville Salt Flats.

be capable of providing a straight course of great length.

Sir Malcom, his Bluebird and his crew, arrived at the small town of Wendover later in the same year and thoroughly investigated the salt flats. The texture of the dazzlingly white surface at different times of the day was taken into consideration as well as the determining of the maximum possible distance that would support the great weight of the car. It was found that the condition of the salt reaches its peak performance-wise early in the morning and that a run of 13 miles could be used.

While the salt remains hard enough to support the weight of a car during the day, the sun draws water to the surface making it hazardous to a certain degree. During the night, the water settles causing the surface to become reasonably dry. So far as is known the 13 mile length is the approximate maximum that a straight course can be layed out. An additional seven miles could be had if it were not for the highway and railroad that bisect it in a East to West direction.

On September 3rd, 1935, at 7:00 A.M. the mighty Bluebird roared to life and within a few moments, the car rolled across the practically limitless surface of the salt. A few minutes later, Campbell's speed was announced as being 304.33 mph and, as his car was being readied for the return run, he decided that, hereafter, Bonneville would be known as the greatest straight speed course in the world.

Since that memorable morning Bonneville has been the scene of many record attempts, most of them successful, for both limited and unlimited class cars.

The present Unlimited record stands at 394.2 mph with one leg being timed at slightly over 403 mph and is held by the late John Cobb. He amazed the racing world when his Railton-Mobil Special succeeded in bettering the world land speed record as well as being the first to surpass the 400 mile mark. That was on September 16th, 1947.

The particular place chosen as being the ultimate for attaining straight-away records lies near the western extremity of the salt flats. The nearest place of habitation is the railroad stop of Salduro. Ten miles to the west as the crow flies lies the town of Wendover which is, peculiarly enough, split by the boundary line that marks the division between Utah and Nevada.

A straight line of over 100 miles in length can be drawn across a map of the Bonneville Salt Flats without it coming in contact with any surface irregularities. This great expanse is not entirely adaptable to racing, however. Several miles from the speed course the hard salt surface becomes increasingly wet and many are the luckless, daring motorists who, having ventured onto the flats, have had their cars become hopelessly stuck in the quagmire-like surface. This situation is particularly true during the mid-winter months of the year. It may be interesting to note here that the majority of the record attempts have been held close to, or during, the month of September. At this time the salt attains its dryest condition after having been drenched with an average rainfall of from 12 to 20 inches.

Far out on the salt one can easily realize why unfortunate birds have been known to drop from sheer exhaustion while attempting to fly over the area. Far-distant mountains can be seen in several directions from any point on the salt surface but the exceedingly clear air and the unbelievably flat surface cause them to seem much closer than they actually are.

A trip across the salt to one of the "islands" is a hazardous experience and should not be attempted by anyone not familiar with existing conditions and the possibility of becoming marooned beyond sight of help.

It might also be noteworthy to mention that the bed of salt is seemingly floating upon an underlying water table. In actuality, this is not quite true but it is possible to dig just a few inches into the salt and watch the hole partially fill with water.

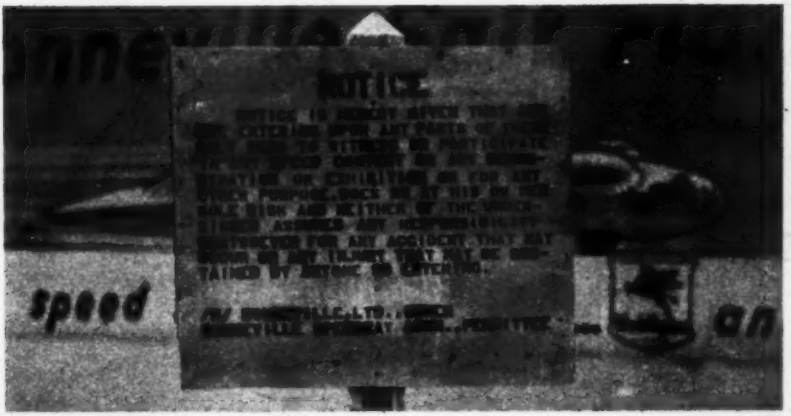
The salt, when wet, becomes quite "sticky" and has been known to build up inside racing car wheel wells to such an extent that it actually caused tire damage. This phenomenon can be readily observed by noting the salt clinging to one's shoes after having walked through a particularly damp section.

A microscopic examination brings to light the fact that the surface salt is, indeed, salt in its unrefined state. The glaring expanse of the surface gives one the feeling that he is standing upon a snow-covered prairie but, in actuality, it is a surface composed of tiny salt crystals clinging together because of the dampness.

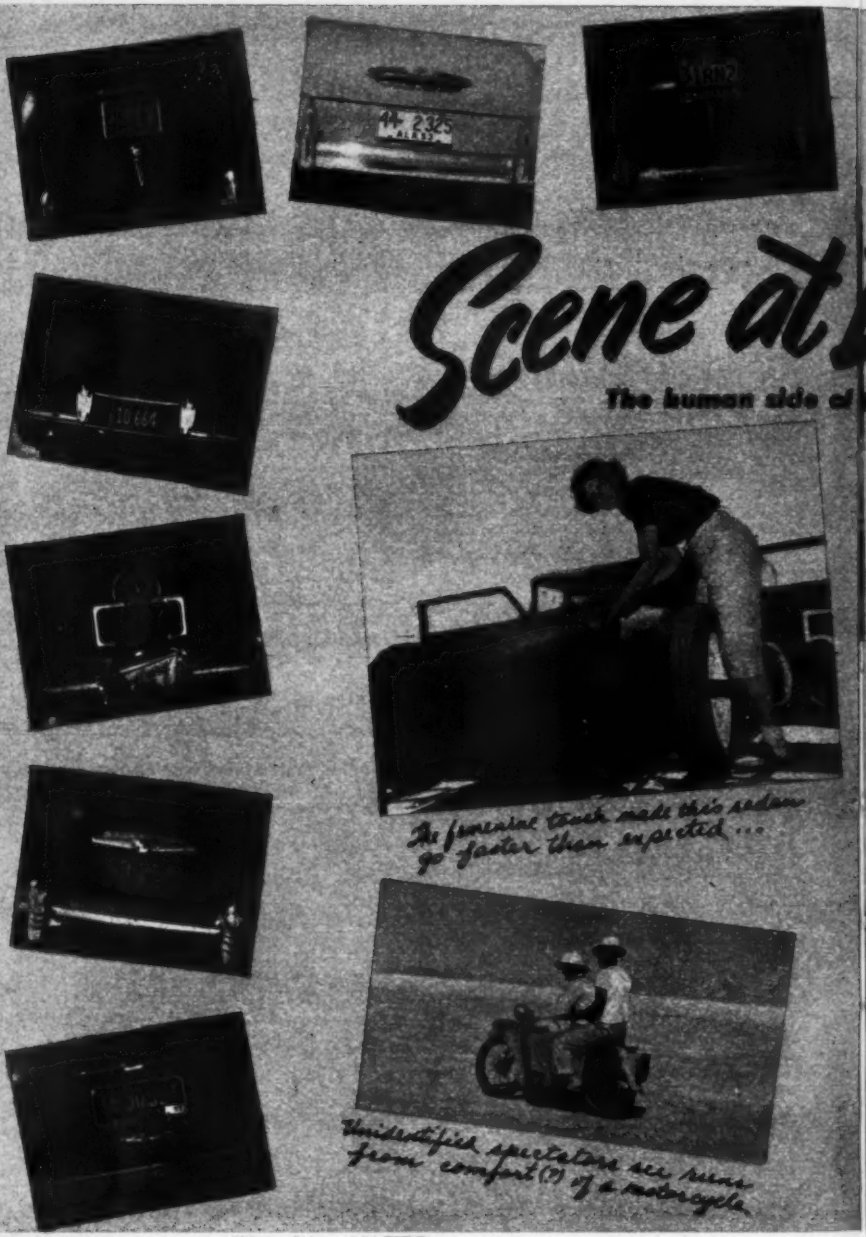
The salt – 500,000,000 tons of it – is not just laying there going to waste. It is being mined, refined and put to commercial use. A number of mining operations are situated right out on the salt.

The salt is not "mined" as the word is usually used when referring to coal, silver or gold mines, rather, it is scraped from the surface. When a particularly choice spot is found and subsequently scraped, the operation is moved to another location – lock, stock and barrel.

This very spot is the place where, during the early part of last September, many records fell by the wayside when America's newest generation of speed enthusiasts showed the rest of the world their capabilities. If top speeds continue to increase as they have in the past, it is not improbable to predict that Bonneville, like Daytona Beach, may become unsuitable for top speed records. As far as is known, there is no place like Bonneville on the face of the globe, so the next move – undoubtedly many years hence – may be to a man-made strip. Who knows?



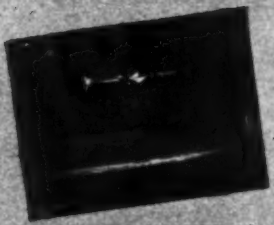
Treachery of the Salt Flats themselves is far more dangerous than speeding cars during trials. Sign supposedly discourages wandering tourists.


Scene at B
The human side of the
The funeral truck made this sedan go faster than expected ...
Unidentified spectators see races from comfort (?) of a motorcycle.

t Bonneville

e of the speed trials.

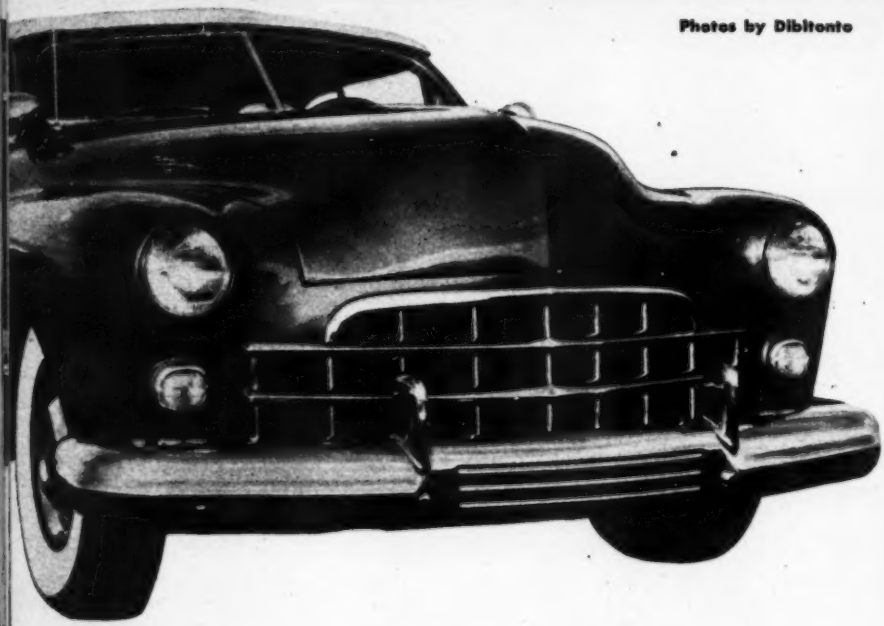
All the comforts of home... almost



Almost every state was represented!

Most people drove to the meet but others flew

Photos by Dibitonto



Purposeful RESTYLING

Nevada-built Mercury custom.

STARTING OUT with an insurance company "total" late in 1949, Sam Dibitonto of Reno, Nevada, reconstructed the Mercury convertible shown on these pages from little more than junk. The car was only a few months old when Sam acquired it and, while repairing the extensive damage, he added many styling treatments as he went along.

While the top of the car has been reduced in height considerably, it is not chopped in the true sense of the word. Lowness was achieved by leaning the windshield rearward, then chopping the windwings and the door and quarter window frames in the usual manner. The original top was replaced by one which is padded.

When the car was completed Sam felt that it lacked many things. First of all, it looked just like many other customized Mercurys and, second, the rear end, with the altered taillights and the filled deck lid gave the car a "lopped-off" appearance. Thus, it wasn't long until he tore into the car again.

1951 Cadillac rear fenders were worked into the Mercury panels and the familiar Cadillac upswept taillight design was altered to resemble the Willys or Pontiac design. Remember, however, that both of these cars were still on the drawing boards at the time. Could it be that Detroit copied Sam's design?

It became necessary to rework the fender contour line of the door to blend in with the new rear fender design. The familiar dip in the Mercury doors was eliminated and the line now falls gracefully into the Cadillac rear fender.

The usual Mercury grille opening was eliminated by reworking the panels to receive a modified '48 Cadillac grille. In addition, the headlights were frenched and the ornamentation was removed from the hood and the holes filled.

Because the Mercury side chrome strips were not particularly suited to the new design of the rear fenders, Sam eliminated them by filling in the holes. Further alterations to the side of the car included the removing of the door handles. The doors are now actuated by small electric push buttons built from Ford glove compartment locks.

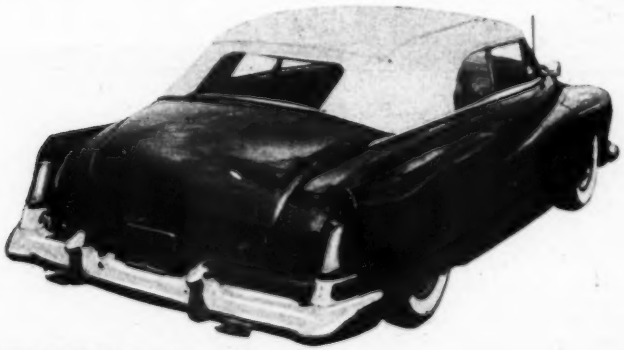
Because Reno is situated at an approximate altitude of 4400 feet, the pulling power of the Mercury engine was noticeably lacking. Sam neatly remedied this situation by removing the engine and replacing it with a '50 Lincoln V8 and Hydramatic transmission. The front springs were replaced with those from a Lincoln to handle the increase in frontal weight. Since a good deal of cross country driving was in store for the car, Sam felt it best to use only stock parts for the conversion so he fitted a Lincoln rear end assembly together with the complete braking system from the same car. The Lincoln components now range from the radiator hoses to the differential including the steering gear which was used so that the added weight of the new engine would not put any undue strain on the lighter Mercury unit.

Modifications to the engine included a ¾ Iskenderian cam, hardened tappets, Edelbrock heads, Meyer 4-lobe ignition, headers and an exhaust system using two inch diameter pipe.

The exterior of the car was completed with the addition of a medium blue lacquer job that evolved from the combining of Chinese Blue and green and gold toner.

A reupholstery job of maroon and grey vinyl plastic took care of the interior and required the services of three shops. Dash alterations included the converting of all instruments to black light and constructing of a speedometer which is now as accurate as is possible — quite different from stock speedometers. A Sun tachometer is mounted below the dash to the right of the steering column and is easily readable at a swift glance.

Since Reno is subject to inclement weather for part of the year, Sam wisely decided against an extensive lowering job. The result is a mild reduction in height of but two inches front and rear.



When a V8 powered T pickup tows a competition coupe for over 700 miles, it means only one thing . . .

DESTINATION - BONNEVILLE

Photos & Text by the Editor

EVER SINCE he attended the 1951 Bonneville Speed Trials as a spectator, Lou Bingham has been waiting for the day to arrive when he could return to the scene as a competitor. About the time that his car appeared in ROD & CUSTOM ("Wheels Aplenty", June, 1953) his ambition had reached new heights and he began planning in earnest. At the time the trials were still more than six months away, but he remembered the old adage, "There's no time like the present", so he set to work.

You will remember that his '32 coupe contained a mildly reworked '36 mill but it had served him for many long years and its original punch was reduced, you might say, to little more than a slight nudge.

Being in the enviable position of working in an auto parts store, Lou had little trouble in locating a 59A block. Once obtained, he took the block to the rear of the store and proceeded to bore it out to 3⅜". The next step was to stroke a crankshaft to an even 4" which would give him a total piston displacement of 286 cubic inches. Next, a Spaulding experimental cam went into the engine together with a set of racing pistons.

With the block both ported and relieved, a set of Edelbrock 8-1 heads were bolted down and the same make manifold was purchased together with two "97" carburetors. The building was completed with the addition of Belond headers and soon all was in readiness for the installation of the engine into the '32.

With the date set for the Bonneville runs approaching at an alarming rate, Lou began casting about to find a desirable method of getting his car to the Salt Flats which lay some 700 miles distant. At first he, like many another enthusiast, considered driving the car to the meet but he decided to put as little mileage as he possibly could on the engine. He was also fearful of placing undue wear and tear on the quick change Halibrand center section, which was loaned to him, so he began to think of another method. Trailers were expensive—expensive to buy, build or rent, so he finally settled for a tow-bar.

Just before leaving on the hazardous journey, Lou packs the remaining equipment into boxes. Trip probably would not have been undertaken if the resulting perils were known at the time.

What, out of water? A frequent happening on the long road to Bonneville. T V8 pickup required more water than gasoline for the 700 mile ride.

At least a month prior to B-day all was in readiness except for such finalities as installing a roll bar, obtaining a fire extinguisher, mounting a bucket seat and a safety belt. One night he was rudely awakened from a sound sleep with the horrible thought that he had nothing with which to *tow* his car.

A week of searching uncovered a rather crudely built T-V8 – a '27 T pickup body mounted on '32 frame rails with a stock '32 engine. He and the owner decided on a price and, once purchased, out came the stock engine and in its place was put the '36 engine that formerly powered the coupe. Before the installation was completed, however, the '36 engine received a much needed going over including new rings, inserts, a valve job, higher compression heads and a new dual manifold.

A quickly applied coat of paint temporarily hid the sins of the original builder and, after a set of tires were located and mounted, the unorthodox looking rig was completed.

September 31st was B-day but with Bonneville hundreds of miles away, Lou had everything in readiness by the 29th. Into the pickup went three five-gallon cans of fuel, two tremendous tool boxes, a wooden chest that contained almost enough equipment to build another engine, camping equipment and supplies to last for more than a week, two mounted tires – and a map.

With the pickup bed being filled to overflowing, the coupe was hooked on behind the T and the various and assundry pieces of equipment that wouldn't fit into the pickup were loaded into the coupe.

About this time R & C arrived upon the scene and measuring and fitting was begun to see if there was enough excess room for one, small Editor. There wasn't, but we loaded ourselves in anyway and began asking silly questions like, "When do you suppose we'll get there, in the morning?", and, "Where can we load all my camping gear and the many pieces of photographic equipment?"

Lou stuck to his task disregarding the interruptions and before long we were ready to set out. The time was late Saturday afternoon and more than 700 miles lay before us.

There are several routes to follow between Los Angeles and Wendover, Utah, which lies on the edge of the salt. We discussed them all and eventually came to a decision on what we hoped to be the best road; however, the rest of the story will prove that we were far from right!

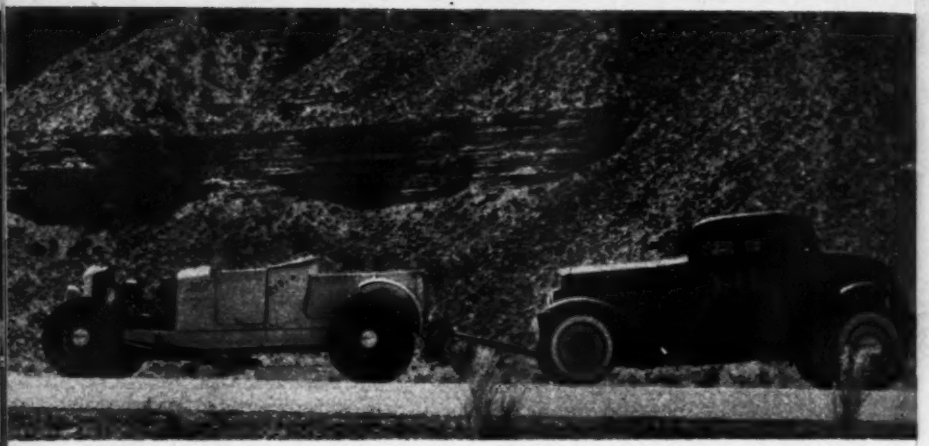
Tentative plans called for the first leg of the journey to take us to Las Vegas, Nevada. There, after a bit of rest, we were to continue a few miles northeast, then turn northwest and follow our noses up through Nevada stopping to rest during the heat of the day and eventually approach Wendover from the south.

Loaded down with the various essentials previously discussed, we rolled out of Lou's driveway and began ascending the long hill that would bring us to the main highway.

Everything went fine for a time and we excitedly chatted about the 1952 Bonneville meet and wondered how many of the records would be broken this year. A half mile of the hill, though, proved the undoing of the struggling little pickup and she began to boil furiously. A quick check proved that we had the pickup loaded down with more than twice its own weight so instead of becoming mad we began to feel sorry for the valiant little machine. A short stop gave the engine the rest it needed and soon we were on our way again. We were nearly to the top of the hill and from there, we hoped, we would have smooth sailing to Wendover.

Scarcely a hundred yards from the crest of

A solution for the out-of-gas problem. Fuel is being transferred from one car to the other.



Not all of the country was dry, flat desert land. Here the cars are shown in the midst of the mountain country about midway on trip. Reason for stop? Pickup had reached the boiling point and was being allowed to simmer down. Shortly afterward the coupe caught fire but was saved with but a small loss.

the hill the radiator let out its merry whistle anew. Still free from worry, we again called a halt and allowed the steaming little rig to simmer down a bit.

After a brief consultation we decided to retrace our steps and return down the hill and take on some water—not only in the radiator but in two five-gallon cans as well. This was eventually accomplished after much equipment rearranging and we set out for Wendover for the second time in one day.

Being later in the evening, the weather had cooled sufficiently to allow our two car caravan to barely make it up the grade and over the top. Just as we passed over the crown of the hill the temperature needle disappeared from sight at the high end of the scale. We were off!

Sleeping in 110° temperature in the shade of the coupe was quite difficult. Jackrabbits caused a hasty departure from the scene some time later.

In the excitement of preparing for the hazardous journey we had forgotten to eat dinner so a brief halt was called at a roadside hamburger stand. Once again on our way we remembered that the pickup had not been filled with gas so instead of chancing the long station-less trip through the California desert we decided to stop and fill 'er up.

The map showed that we had come 1½ miles and had had to stop five times! Was this an indication of what lay ahead? We didn't know then—but we do now!

Off again. This time things went smoothly and we soon found ourselves free from traffic and heading through the night toward the desert regions where the cheery lights from country houses became less and less. Everything was going according to plan, the engine hummed a merry tune and the wheels pounded a steady rhythm on the smooth, broad, straight highway.

Before long, though, the staccato of the engine's exhaust slowed a trifle and the headlights picked out the rise of an approaching hill. The speedometer needle dropped a shade, then continued downward. At the same time, the temperature needle started its upward swing. It was as though the two instruments were connected, one working just the reverse of the other. Into second gear and over the hill we went and as we dropped down the

other side the two dial needles reversed their direction of travel. Our joys were short lived, though, for we had dropped into a valley and we had yet to ascend the other side. This grade proved to be worse than was expected and the teakettle-like whistle soon pierced the night air with its familiar sound. Being but a scant hundred feet from the summit we decided to force the issue and get over the top, regardless. Our caravan slowed a bit more, the radiator whistled even louder and the headlights illumined a white sign upon which was lettered the word "Summit". We breathed a sigh of relief as the road leveled before us and we were just ready to stop and fill the radiator when the cap blew off under tremendous pressure. We covered our heads and waited for the cap to descend for whatever goes up must come down. It came down in a short time but clattered harmlessly on the roadway beside us; however, it was soon followed by a column of boiling water which not only dampened our spirits but served to warm us up slightly.

Having come such a great distance without having to stop (10 miles) we felt that trifles such as this were bound to happen but, alas, the inevitable finally occurred. The column of water had descended not only on us but upon the distributor as well. No amount of urging would start the engine after it had once died. Only by draining the water from the distributor body and carefully blowing the excess liquid from the caps were we able to continue. At long last our trusty V8 roared to life, though we seemed to detect a slight miss now and then. We concluded that there must be a trace of water around the plugs and, hoping the unhooded engine would soon become dry. We took off once again covering ourselves for protection against the cold night air that was beginning to creep through our outer clothing.

The pickup bucked and stumbled and no amount of hoping, praying and pleading would get it to clear up and regain its usual 8-beat composure.

Our seventh stop of the night, after having covered considerable ground (18 miles), showed the distributor points were badly burned and to continue under such conditions would surely result in the overheating of the engine. We were left no alternative but to continue as best we could, regardless. Envious of the cars that whizzed past us and tired after the long day of making preparations, we completely forgot that the coupe contained a nearly new ignition system. In fact, it was more than eighteen hours later that one of us brought it to mind — but that is another part of the story.

With the V8 reduced to 3 cylinders on one side and 2 on the other we struggled across the prairie heading, we hoped, eastward on the highway leading to Nevada.

Soon the pickup called for more gasoline in a rather unusual manner — it stopped cold and refused to budge even so much as an inch. Being far from any service station we poured some of the "Bonneville fuel" into the T's ten gallon tank. Needless to say, the output of the V8 increased to an alarming degree — even for 5 cylinders.

Later, a halt was called while the plugs were pulled and cleaned but the project resulted in no improvement in performance.

Thus, struggling our way through the night, we gratefully pulled into Las Vegas just as the sun began its climb over the Eastern mountains bringing with it its heat.

A bit of computing showed us that we had traveled not quite 300 miles in something over 12 hours with the result that our average had been less than 25 miles an hour —

Bonneville at last! Coupe (center), still towed by pickup, waits in first-day inspection line.

a bit slower than we had originally planned. At the outset, it had been figured that an average speed of 27.5 mph was necessary if we were to reach the salt flats at the opening of the week-long meet.

Being behind schedule it was important that we neglect our planned stopover and travel, if possible, through the dry, boiling desert regions of Nevada during the extreme heat of the day. Even on reasonably level ground, as the sun rose higher in the sky, the temperature needle started its slow climb which, we were to find out, would not cease until the sun began to sink that evening in the West.

The slightly hilly country gave us little trouble for we discovered that what heat was generated during the short climbs was lost again during the down hill runs. However, it was still necessary to call a halt every so often and take on water. During one three hour period the cut down '37 radiator required over five gallons of water — but Wendover was coming closer and closer.

Midafternoon found us situated at the approximate half-way point. The heat had be-

One of the many Halibrand gear changes on the salt. First run by the coupe netted but 93 mph.

come so intense that the temperature of the coupe's radiator hovered near the 100 mark. All the while the pickup's engine was laboring under the strain of pulling much more weight than should have been asked of it plus the fact that it was putting out in the neighborhood of 5/8ths of its total power.

At last we could stand the strain no longer and we tumbled out of the cramped cockpit of the T and fell asleep right on the hot desert sand in the somewhat comforting shade of the coupe.

The waning day brought out countless numbers of gigantic jackrabbits and, upon wakening, we spied several of the exceptionally large creatures gazing at us with watering mouths — or so it seemed. Probably being the largest members of the hare family, their eyes seemed to sadden as we hurried to get the caravan under way once again and as we took our leave they dolefully hopped away in search, no doubt, of another meal.

Pushing the starter button starts two things on Lou's pickup. It starts the engine to run and the temperature needle to climb. Up *it* went and on *we* went, stopping every mile or two to refill the seemingly bottomless tank of the radiator.

While struggling up a particularly steep hill we detected the missing of 2 additional cylinders reducing us to a conservative 3. About this time the coupe's ignition was remembered. Up went the hood exposing a newly rebuilt, borrowed Harmon & Collins magneto. Within a matter of minutes the mag was affixed to the pickup's engine and we were off once again trying to become accustomed to hearing the beat of an 8 cylinder engine after having listened to the 5 for so long a time.

Twilight brought welcome relief in the form of cooler air and our speed increased accordingly. Dinner found us in Ely, Nevada, at the beginning of the last leg into Wendover. Needless to say, it was with reduced anxiety that we set out to put the remaining 125 miles behind us, particularly after an incident that had happened an hour or so earlier.

As is generally the case, we came upon a section of road that was undergoing repairs. For several miles we were down to the greatly reduced speed of 5 or 6 miles an hour. On a long down grade when no pull was being exerted on the coupe, the coupe's front wheels began to shimmy quite violently. No amount of stopping and restarting would halt this action so a stop was made and the drag link (disconnected so the car would track while it was being towed) was connected. The idea was to steer the coupe and steady the wheel to reduce the shimmying tendency until the detour was passed. This worked fine until a sudden jolt of the coupe as it passed over a particularly large bump dislodged a piece of uninsulated wire which fell, unnoticed, across the terminals of the coupe's battery. The resulting short went unseen until smoke began pouring from a sleeping bag. After a great deal of scurrying to and fro to find the fire extinguisher the difficulty was righted and, needless to say, precaution was taken thenceforth to minimize the danger of such an event recurring.

The further we went the colder it got and after several stops to don warmer clothing the temperature had dropped to the point where it became almost impossible to drive the T at any considerable rate of speed without becoming thoroughly numbed from the icy wind. With only a few miles separating us from our destination clouds began to gather and in a few moments rain began falling, adding greatly to our misery. We gritted our teeth and drove through the onslaught, though, and finally, drenched to the skin, we pulled into Wendover in time to see the morning sun poke its head above the eastern rim of Utah's Great Basin.

But, no, the story doesn't end there. With a few hours remaining before the speed trials were officially begun, we pulled off to the side of the road, crawled under the coupe to escape the now lessening rain and fell into a sound sleep. Later we were awakened by a kind-hearted soul who announced in a loud voice that it was 6 o'clock. Thanking him, we sleepily prepared to drive the remaining five miles to the entrance to the Salt Flats. Later, when fully awake, we wondered what was so significant about 6 o'clock but we passed the matter off as a practical joke and bent to the task of preparing the coupe for what turned out to be a long series of runs.

Coupe-pickup pit area reveals only small part of total equipment taken to Salt Flats. Car's speed was below expectations so fenders were removed.

As the meet officially opened, we were surprised to see so many enthusiasts in the morning line-up. As a rule, the majority of the competitors don't begin arriving until later in the week but if the runs made during the first day were any indication of what was to follow, then the 1953 meet easily passed all others in attendance.

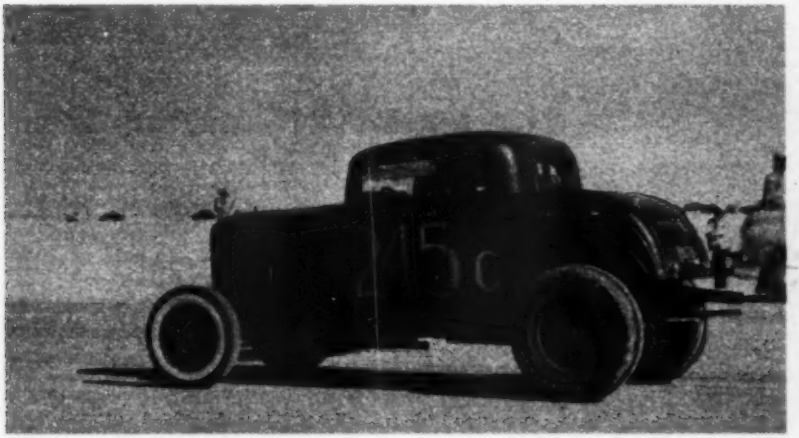
The top speed of Lou's coupe rose from an initial mark on Monday of 93 mph to slightly over 127 mph by the following Saturday. This was mainly due to the methodical way in which Lou worked over his engine out on the salt. Instead of making numerous changes at the rate of three or four at a time, he would make just one alteration, then take the car out to the line and run it. Back to the pit area, after recording his speed, and another single change was made. The last run by him found the coupe in a little different condition than when it originally arrived at Bonneville. The dual carburetor manifold was replaced with a three-jugger set up for fuel, gasoline was forgotten as a mixture of alcohol and nitromethane was added in the endless quest for speed, the rear wheels and tires were replaced with 7.50 x 18 Indianapolis "skins" and the four fenders and running boards were temporarily laid aside.

With the meet over at last after a long, hard week of roughing it, Lou was glad to start the trip home. The route through Las Vegas was by-passed in favor of another that led directly westward to central California, then turned and dropped due southward toward Los Angeles.

It was with much apprehension that we left the Salt Flats, again towing the coupe behind the little pickup, for we had heard that Bonneville is the only place in the world that is uphill whether one is going to or coming from it. However, the long trip homeward was interrupted only occasionally by the need of water and the plaintive calling of the quickly-emptied gas tank.

Will Lou be back next year? You bet he will, if his determination has anything to do with it. "In fact," he says, "I'll be there if I have to walk!".

Final run by Lou's 245C with borrowed rear tires turned out to be in excess of 127 mph, increase of 34 mph over initial trial made week earlier.



For Roadster Owners Only . . .

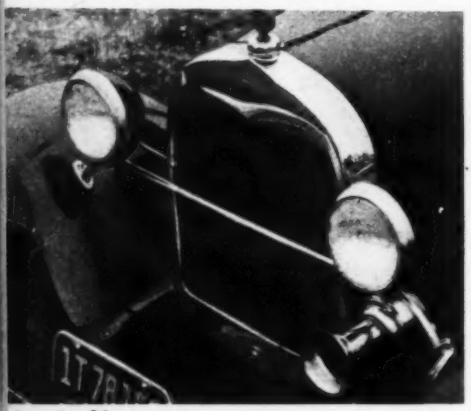
Those little things that Add so much

The enthusiasm for building roadsters and pickups is growing perceptibly day by day. Fortunately the love of an open car is still with many of us. Detroit's convertibles don't seem to quite fill the bill for some people so they have taken it upon themselves to construct the car of their dreams by incorporating the bodies from cars of years long past.

There is such an increasing number of roadsters being built the country over that it is becoming quite difficult to distinguish between many of those having the same model body.

While a well-built, fast-stepping little roadster is a thrill to own and drive why are most of the rod builders content with driving look-alikes?

If you find yourself on the horns of this dilema, consider the examples shown here and see if, from them, you can't formulate ideas of your own to be worked into *your* car.

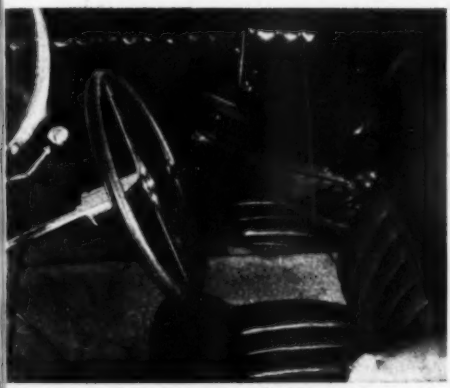


THERE'S ONE thing that always plagues the hop up enthusiasts when it comes to adding the final details to a rod. That is, what to use for headlights, or, what to use for a grille shell, etc. Usually they end up with something that suggests a fresh approach to a new problem but, as is usually the case, it is something that has been done before. Therefore, certain ideas have become accepted, such as a '32 radiator shell on an A-bodied rod, and any deviation from the rule is looked upon as something of a freak.

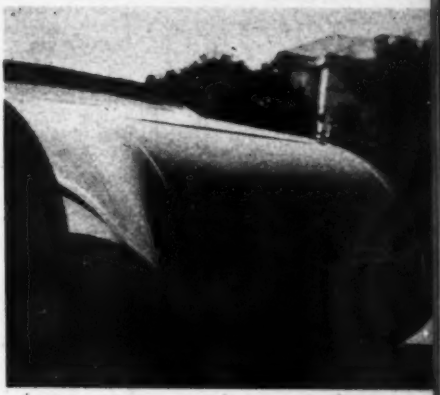
There was no problem as to what to use for parts on the car pictured in the accompanying photo. After considering various grille alterations and headlight treatments for quite some time, the owner eventually decided to leave well enough alone and merely restore the original components to better than new condition. This he did, and with extremely pleasing results.

For some reason we always manage to get around to the taillight problem. Probably because it is one of the more perplexing questions. From time to time in this column we have pictured taillights that run from the ridiculous to the sublime. Some of the rods illustrated have had rather small bodies with enormous lights while others, having larger bodies, have been fitted with lights that are practically infintesimal. One of the neatest solutions, though, to come our way are the lights installed on this handsome T-bodied roadster.

It could be said that the '46 Ford lights have been frenched into the tail pan of the roadster but that is not exactly the case. Frenching, as we have come to know it, describes the molding in of the formerly chromed taillight rim but in this case the lenses alone have been mounted from inside the car and there is no suggestion of a rim or lip to surround them.



Just in case you are still not satisfied with the results of a channeling job, regardless of what we said in a foregoing example, consider this treatment of the lowering problem. Many enthusiasts still believe that in order to get their rod as near to the ground as they want, it is necessary to drop the body around the frame. The reasoning being that the frame *must* retain a certain height so that springing and running gear components can maintain their original relationships. There is a fallacy in that thought, though, and it is this. The *portion* of the frame near either end must retain a certain height but there is practically no limit to the amount the center part may be dropped. The illustration shows how this is accomplished. The frame has been stepped by severing the side rails and positioning the ends several inches higher, then joining the sections with gussets. The result is a frame that is as strong, if not stronger, than it was originally.



One of the chief objectives of rod builders is to construct a car as low as possible to the ground. Channeling is, of course, by far the most popular method of attaining this lowness but there are other methods that are as good, if not better. One of these is the stepping of the frame at the ends including, of course, the crossmembers. This results in the portion of the frame below the body cockpit being lower than either end, hence more leg room—a notable drawback to a channel job.

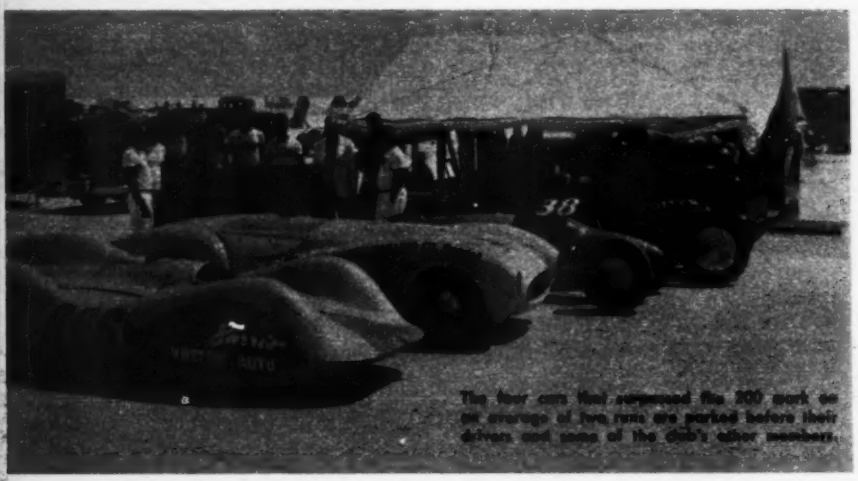
There is, however, a solution to the leg room problem in a channel job. A glance at the adjoining photo will show you that the floor between the frame rails has been recessed a considerable amount. Across this depression runs the driveshaft tunnel which rises to a height equal to that of the seats. Since the center part of the seat is, naturally, unusable, the builder of this car has constructed a folding armrest to provide the utmost in comfort.

Additions

TO THE 200 MPH CLUB

Four new members qualify during first week of September

Photos by Poole



The four cars that surpassed the 200 mark on an average of two runs are parked before their driven and some of the club's other members.

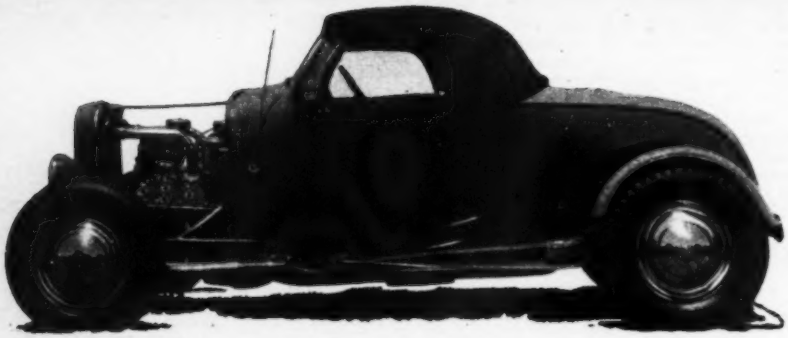
FOUR MEN were welcomed into HOP UP and MOTOR LIFE's renowned 200 MPH CLUB during the first week of September at the annual running of the Bonneville National Time Trials. While the early part of the week saw many cars approaching the 200 mark it was not until Thursday that LeRoy Holmes, of San Bernardino, Calif., boosted his time to better than 190 mph. Being qualified to run for the record the following morning, LeRoy, driving Scotty's Muffler Service class B Lakester, succeeded in turning up a two way average speed of 201.015. It had been said several years ago that no open wheel car would ever succeed in surpassing the 200 mph barrier but LeRoy, at the wheel of the belly-tank car, proved otherwise to the astonishment of all concerned. The record setting pace came as a reward only after the car's pit crew had worked practically straight through from Monday morning when the speed of the car was at the 136 mph mark. *Congratulations, LeRoy, the charter members of the group are glad to have you in their ranks!*

Saturday, Sept. 5th, saw two additional members welcomed into the exclusive organization. The first was Joe Mabee of Midland, Texas. Joe, piloting a Fibreglass-bodied sports car, succeeded in unnerving early morning spectators as the yellow car streaked across the salt and racked up a two way average speed of 203.105 mph. The most surprised person was Joe himself who originally came to Utah from Texas with the dream of being able to better 170 mph. The 33 mph increase was due to the big Chrysler engine built for Mabee by Ray Brown of Hollywood, Calif. While it has been said that the car closely resembles a streamliner it may be noted that openings for tire changing have been provided in the body and the driver's head is not protected by a canopy. *Welcome to the world's most exclusive racing club, Joe!*

With the changing of qualifications of one of the streamliner classes at Bonneville this year, class D was left wide open. All one had to do was set a two-way-average, regardless of speed, and become the record holder in this class. Until, that is, someone should come along and better the mark. However, when Chet Herbert's "Beast 4" was rolled onto the salt for the first time late in the week, those present knew that the record would be a hard one to beat. Herbert's cars and motorcycles have been hard to beat in the past and, true to form, this one turned out to be no exception. With LeRoy Numayer at the helm, which loudly advertised "Body by Barris", the blue and yellow streamliner, running at the last possible minute on the last day, passed the 200 mark a minimum distance up the track, and went on to set an average speed of 216.541. Everyone was surprised excepting builder Herbert and driver Numayer who well knew the Chrysler-powered car's capabilities. *The club welcomes you as its latest member, LeRoy.*

The second man on Saturday to join the ranks of the elite was Harvey Haller of Bellflower, California. Harvey, driving the Chrysler powered Breene-Haller class D Lakester, qualified for the record run at 198.67 mph late Friday afternoon. Bright and early the following morning the little orange tank blasted up the course and returned a few minutes later. Within a short time the P.A. system announced that Haller's average was an almost unbelievable 209.485 mph.

Having just returned from an extended tour of duty with the U. S. Navy, it was with the greatest pleasure that he entered HOP UP and MOTOR LIFE's 200 MPH CLUB trailer at the salt flats and announced that he had just become a new member of the organization. It might be interesting to note that Harvey constructed the better part of his car during such spare time as he was able to find during his "hitch" with the service. *We're glad to have you aboard, Harvey!*



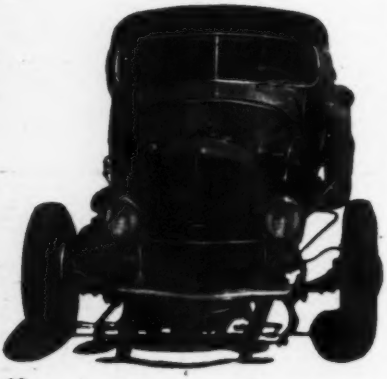
"BITTERSWEET" BOMB

An example of Northern Ingenuity.

Photos by Poole

ALL THE way down from Tracy, Calif., comes this fine little roadster through the courtesy of its owner, Eugene Pereira. Cars like this just don't happen, though, they require many, many hours of painstaking, back-breaking work that is seldom, if ever, appreciated by the average, casual observer.

Let's consider Eugene's '29 A, for example. Several years ago someone started constructing this car but, somewhere along the line, he managed to get himself distracted and start on another project. The half-heartedly assembled rod sat unwanted for some time — that is until Eugene happened along. It didn't require much urging on his part to convince the owner that the rod should be sold instead of just wasting away so, before long, Eugene found himself towing the car homeward. Once there, he dismantled practically everything and started the project all over again.



Head-on view shows fine condition of '32 shell. Club plate shows "Century Toppers" membership.

After more than a year of constructing and reconstructing, the completed car was rolled out of the paint shop and the proud owner immediately made tracks for Rosamond Dry Lake where he succeeded in coaxing 119 out of his rod.

All of this was slightly over four years ago but the car remains, to this day, in its same, fine condition — a tribute to its builder.

The history of the car began in a Ford factory where it emerged as just one of thousands of '29 A roadsters. Eighteen years later — in 1947 — someone conceived the idea of replacing the old, worn-out four banger engine with a more modern V8.

While the switch was taking place, it was decided to discard most of the A's running gear and replace it with the same components from a dismantled '32. From the same '32 was borrowed the radiator and grille shell — with the latter being filled before installation thus eliminating the water inlet hole and the Ford medallion.

The gas tank, formerly under the cowl, was removed and repositioned, together with the battery, in the trunk. With the additional space acquired under the cowl by the removal of the tank, it was possible to insert a dash panel from a 1930 Buick including

the original instruments—a novel switch from the sort of dash generally seen in a car of this type.

The front suspension assembly from a '39 Ford took the place of the A equipment and, at the same time, provided hydraulic brakes which were duplicated in the rear.

With the body and chassis work pretty well under control by this time, Eugene turned to engine building. First, the block was ported and relieved. Next, a boring bar was pushed through it enlarging the cylinders slightly, then a set of Kogel heads were unearthed and installed. Eugene felt that the carburetion department was insufficient to cope with the altered internal workings of the engine, so he purchased a Weiand manifold and a pair of 97 pots.

The exhaust situation was adequately controlled by a set of headers leading through twin mufflers and, finally, exiting at the rear of the car. To be used for dragging only, Eugene has a set of "lakes plugs" outlets just ahead of the mufflers. A good ignition set-up was devised and, at last, the bomb was ready to storm.

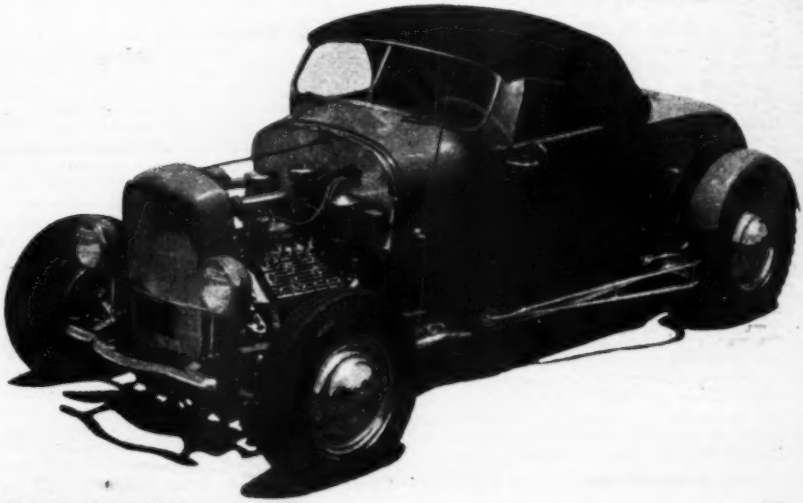
The resulting power output runs through 26-tooth Lincoln gears, a 3.78 rear end and, finally, to the ground via 6.50 x 16 tires. The smaller front tires are 5.50 x 16 for stability.

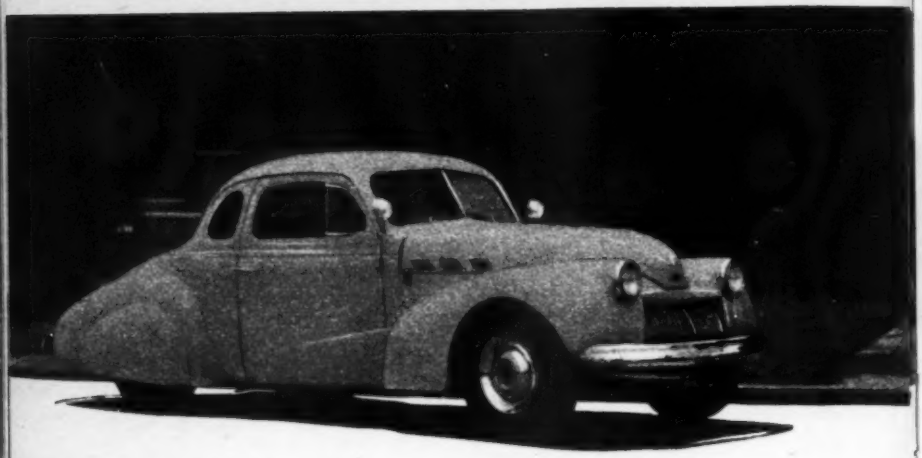
With the question of motive power safely out of the way, attention was directed, once

(Continued on Page 62)

Rear bumper is '37 DeSoto narrowed to fit body.

Unusual look of car is due to cut down '37 Ford windshield. Filled radiator shell is from a '32.





New ideas and an older car are combined in this . . .

Chic Chevy

Photos and text by B. O. Boyles

SINCE World War II custom car building in this country has soared to new heights. Generally based on the desire to own something a little different from the usual Detroit offerings, these customs range all the way from minor dechroming and hood and deck planing to radical restyling jobs.

The custom shown here is one of the latter. Not only is it unusual in styling, but the car chosen to be customized is one that has not been noted for any inherent beauty of design.

Rene J. Leonhard, the builder, a sailor of Corpus Christi, Texas, has always wanted something a little out of the ordinary in his automobiles. He started out in the customizing business with a 1949 Buick convertible. Changes to it were mostly mechanical, consisting of the installation of an Olds Rocket engine and minor exterior changes. The next effort on his part was an 810 Cord, but this one didn't get far beyond the planning stages before he received such an inviting offer for the car that he couldn't turn it down.

Next, he started looking for a Ford coupe to rework. While searching one day, he came across a 1938 Chevrolet business coupe. He began thinking about the car and suddenly realized that if he chose that car to customize he wouldn't have to chop the top or do a great amount of body modification. The windows were narrow, and there was not a great deal of space between the rear of the doors and the rear fenders, as is the case with most Ford coupes, which, unless carefully handled in radical styling changes, sometimes gives the effect of being out of correct proportion.

He purchased the car for $35.00 and hauled it home — then the fun began! He removed the engine and the transmission, took out the front and rear suspension assemblies and removed the body. The chassis was then stepped six inches and, at the same time, shortened three inches. This gave the car a wheelbase of 100 inches. The body was lowered about two inches over the frame side rails. Next, a Columbia rear end was installed, then the engine; the same Olds power plant that had been in the Buick. When Leonhard sold the

Buick he kept the "88" and the Hydramatic transmission for just such a possibility as this Chevrolet.

An Olds rear crossmember was obtained, shortened approximately 3½" on each side then welded to the frame. The front engine mounts were built up from the Chevy front crossmember. The engine was then mounted in the chassis, about four inches off the center of gravity to give better steering characteristics. A torque tube drive using a '40 Mercury drive shaft chopped almost two feet was first used, running 3.54 differential gears. This, however, brought on troubles. In subsequent road tests the torque tube howled considerably. That installation was removed and a Hotchkiss drive substituted, using a chopped '40 Olds drive shaft. The same rear end was used but the gear ratio was dropped to 3.78 to give better acceleration. An oil seal was fabricated for the Ford rear end to go with the Hotchkiss drive. At this point it would be well to mention that all didn't go as well as the story may indicate. A great amount of machining and reworking of the various component parts of the drive set-up was necessary before an acceptable performance was obtained.

Incidentally, the third rear end thus far is now in the car with what is apparently the right ratio for both the driver and the car without causing undue strain to the rear end.

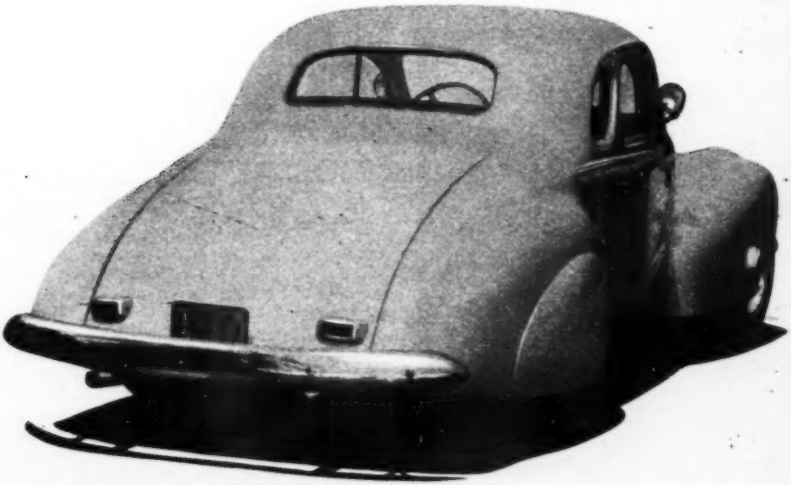
The radiator is from a '41 Buick Roadmaster to give an extra large cooling capacity for the Rocket engine.

When the car was first completed, Leonhard had some trouble with front wheel bearings since the weight of the car had been increased. After he had replaced four bearings on one side and two on the other, he decided that it was time to do something about it. He bought a set of '41 Ford bearings, put the cones and the bushings on the Chevy spindles, with some modification, giving a bearing surface three times as great as that of the original installation. This greater bearing surface also makes for better steering of this little beauty. The stock steering geometry and linkage is retained, giving a quick, positive steering action with little or no lost motion.

Leonhard was not satisfied with the performance that he was getting with a single carburetor, so he recently built a two-carburetor intake manifold using '50 Ford pots with the automatic spark advance. At the time of this writing, the carbs were working fine except that they loaded up slightly after a few minutes of idling.

The engine is absolutely stock except for the aforementioned manifold and twin exhaust headers with dual pipes which the owner built himself. The mufflers were rolled from stainless steel and packed with bronze shavings. The exhaust pipes are two inch boiler tubing. The exhaust system is welded together from one end to the other to prevent rattles and exhaust leakage.

The front and rear fenders and the hood are from a 1940 Pontiac. The grille is from a 1942 Ford minus the original center section. As the reader has probably noted, the builder of this custom has borrowed heavily



Lowness of channeled Chevy is evident from this angle. Taillights are '41 Ford turned sideways.

from two rival manufacturers in putting this car together, namely: Ford and G.M.

The front fenders were virtually unchanged but the hood was a different matter. It had to be shortened a foot, widened at the front and narrowed at the rear to fit the Chevy's contours. Once it was installed, Leonhard discovered that it would not close without hitting the carburetor. This problem was solved ingeniously. A '39 Chevrolet headlamp was cut in two and half of it welded to the hood at the crucial point. A hole was then cut underneath the protrusion for clearance. This gave him plenty of room to close his hood and, at the same time, added an air scoop for increasing the amount of air to the carburetor. The opening of the scoop was covered with a fine mesh screen to give it a little better appearance.

The rear fenders presented still another problem which was easily solved, however, by the use of prodigious quantities of lead. The right fender required 11½ pounds while the left one needed but 9½ pounds. Leonhard says that he got better as he went along which explains the use of less lead in the left fender which was done last.

All in all, things have not gone too smoothly with this custom. In addition to the wheel bearing, driveshaft and rear end troubles previously encountered, there was one other trouble worth mentioning. Leonhard's wife had looked askance at all the noise and work going on in her backyard and was not in the least inclined to favor riding in her husband's handiwork. However, after much persuasive talking she finally consented. Everything went smoothly until, at a considerable rate of speed, the alligator type hood seemed to gasp for air and flew up in a most annoying manner. This little incident somewhat decreased both Leonhard's and the custom's popularity on the domestic side of the proceedings.

As it turned out, though, things worked out all right as may be seen in the accompanying photographs. The hood now hinges from the front with trunk-type latches at the rear to make sure that it doesn't come loose again. (As a matter of note, Mrs. Leonhard has been converted again and really enjoys riding in and driving the car.)

The seat is from a '40 Ford business coupe and the instrument section of the dash is from a '49 Mercury. The steering wheel is Buick, adapted to fit the Chevrolet splines. The Hydramatic dial indicator is from a '42 Oldsmobile.

The upholstery, eggshell white and black, was the only item of work on the car that was farmed out. The paint job is Canto Cream which goes quite well with the interior colors.

One nice feature of the car is the deck lid. It raises and lowers at the touch of a button through the use of two electric motors which once operated the convertible top of a '41 DeSoto. The motors and arms were installed virtually unchanged except for the lengthening of the connecting wires. Leonhard got a first class bargain on the deck lid mechanism, paying only two dollars for the entire rig.

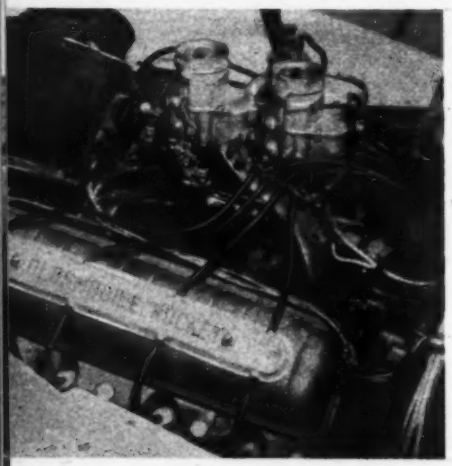
The hydraulic master cylinder is mounted on the firewall in the best 1953 tradition. The brake pedal, therefore, hangs from the firewall eliminating obstructions on the floor and at the same time does away with bothersome water and air leaks at that spot.

This custom is an eye-stopper everywhere it goes. With the careful working out of body modifications to match the existing body structure, the builder has done an excellent job of constructing a pleasing combination of speed and beauty. Not only were the looks and performance angles taken into consideration when the car was still in the planning stages, the handling characteristics also received attention. The car handles well not only on the road but corners nearly flat without any undue sway.

The builder has entered the car in several drag matches and has come away with quite a few wins under his belt against both stock and hopped up cars.

Leonhard has put $800 worth of materials in his car plus seven months of hard labor. He is now ready to sell it so that he can begin work, as he says, "On a radical job!"

Power plant of "Chic Chevy" is this Oldsmobile engine, stock except for dual carburetors and exhaust headers. Transmission is a Hydramatic.



Photos by Poole

A CUSTOM AT *Bonneville*

Washington enthusiast visits Utah.

NOT ALL of the cars at this year's Bonneville meet were out-and-out competition cars. Many of them were the type of car you would expect to meet on the highways and byways every day of the year -- with the exception, of course, of their reworked engines. Many more of them were of the type to be found in auto shows -- beautiful roadsters and pickups with shiny lacquer paint jobs and with chrome glinting in the bright sunlight. Still other cars at the salt would fall into the custom category such as the example shown on these pages.

Doug Rice came all the way to the salt flats from Aberdeen, Washington, in his chopped and channeled '29 Ford coupe. To the great surprise of many of the competition-type-car enthusiasts, Doug, after having worked over his car throughout the week, turned in a top time of 126.58 mph. Not bad for a dyed in the wool custom enthusiast.

Doug, doing all of his own work, chopped

Overall height of this 1929 Ford coupe has been considerably reduced by chopping and channeling. Fenders have been raised on the body giving the car the appearance of crouching on the ground.

Rear end modifications include widening of the fenders, filling the deck lid and installing '37 DeSoto bumpers with taillights in guards.

Despite apparenty hampered riding qualities, car and driver suffered no ill effects during trip from Washington to Utah for speed trials.

the top of his car 3 inches at the front and 4½ inches at the rear. Then he channeled the body the width of the frame rails which, in the case of his '39, amounted to about 5½ inches. Still not being content with the overall height of his coupe, he installed a dropped front axle and lowered the rear by kicking up the frame. This brought the car down to a respectable level so attention was turned toward the body proper.

The channeling necessitated the raising of the four fenders. The rear fenders, when raised on the body, did not look quite right, Doug felt, so he moved them out from the body by adding a two inch section of metal to their inner edges. This not only leaves ample clearance for the rear tires but adds in giving the car an apparent increase in width.

The raising of the front fenders called for the sectioning of the hood. Next, the center seam of the hood was filled leaving a broad, uninterrupted expanse of metal. The side chrome strip was necessarily shortened due to the fact that the fenders now occupied most of its former position.

The engine compartment, being somewhat reduced in height because of the channeling operation, is currently crammed with a 296 cu. in. Ford V8. The block, besides being bored, has had a port and relieve job both of which add considerably to the engine's efficiency. The crank has been stroked 3/8" over stock. The heads and the four carburetor manifold were all supplied by Edelbrock.

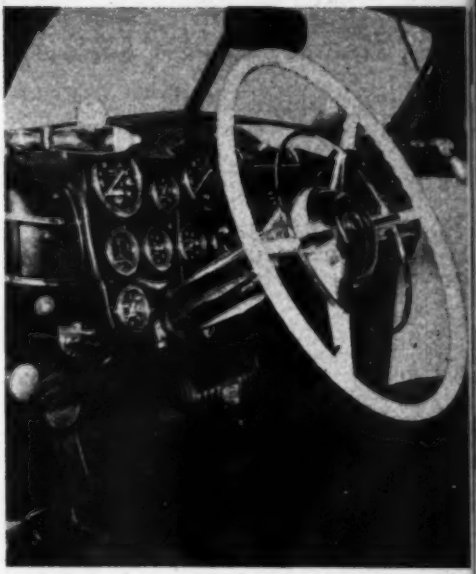
Harman and Collins provided the magneto ignition and Doug, after much painstaking work, came up with a fine set of home built headers. The activities of the engine are all dutifully recorded by the Stewart Warner instruments which are closely grouped to-

gether in a reworked '40 Ford dash panel.

With his heart set on turning up a better than average speed on the salt, Doug installed a Halibrand quick change rear end center section before he left Aberdeen. Later it caused him no end of consternation since the straight-cut gears raise a considerable howl. Not being sure whether or not this was a normal sound for a Halibrand, Doug worried throughout the lengthy trip. Once at Bonneville, though, he was assured that this is a normal situation from which very little harm could result.

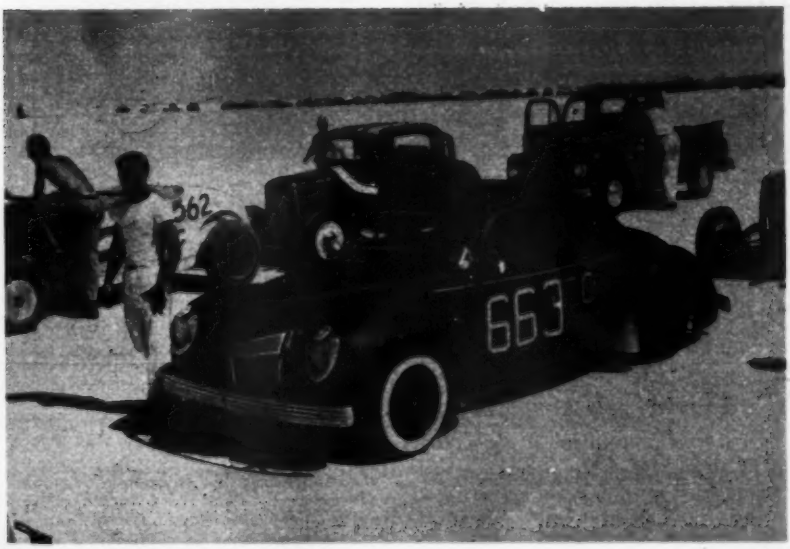
After having turned up his top time using just straight alcohol for fuel, Doug loaded his little car down with what equipment he had been able to bring with him and set out for California to spend the remaining part of his vacation.

Owner-builder Rice is a member of the Washington "Clusters" hence club plaque on the rear bumper.



'40 Ford dash, fitted into '39 car, has been reworked so that Stewart Warner instruments could be added. Steering wheel is a late Ford.

Car is stripped of accessories when lined up for run at starting area. Coupe went 126.58.



ATTENTION DETROIT!

Our Editorial for September, concerning the drawbacks of American built cars, contained the following statement: "If you have any personal gripes about your car (if it is of fairly recent make—'49 or up) drop us a line or two about them and we'll try to bring them to Detroit's attention."

The letters presented here seem to contain a good cross section of the majority of the letters we received. The loudest complaints concerned a lack of water-tightness but let's let these readers tell us their troubles in their own words. Notice that each letter describes a car made by one of the Big Three and that they come from widely separated points.

Are you listening Detroit?

In reference to your editorial in the September issue I should like to register the following complaints about my 1953 Chevrolet.

A. The car, as a whole, has given me very poor service. This concerns gas mileage, tire mileage, general operating costs, etc.

B. The poorly assembled body is accompanied by more than its normal share of rattles and squeaks.

C. The entire front suspension assembly seems to be loose but no amount of checking uncovers any defects.

D. The car came complete with the usual poor Chevrolet paint job.

E. The hood, when closed, does not conform to the gap provided between the two front fenders.

I should like to add that I believe you have a good idea and if it could become a regular feature of ROD & CUSTOM, Detroit would have to start doing a better construction job on their cars.

Verne Smith, Jr. *Williamsburg, Ohio*

You asked for gripes in your September Editorial so here are mine.

A friend of mine and myself each have a Mercury. One is a '50 and the other is a '53. Despite the three year difference between these cars and regardless of the fact that a major body change was incorporated in '52, both cars suffer from the same drawback. Both of them leak water, whether its raining or whether the cars are being washed, from below the dashboard. Apparently the rubber mounted windshields are not sufficiently sealed against adverse weather. Not only has this caused stains on the upholstery of both cars but both my friend and myself have had new suits practically ruined during a particularly heavy down pour.

Aside from the leaks, the cars seem to be O.K., however, I won't buy another Merc until the factory cures the water problem.

Artie Conrad *Ridgewood, L.I., N.Y.*

At last! At last a chance to blow off steam about my ten month old '53 Dodge. First off, the body in general:

The overall design is smart and good looking but the way the automobile was thrown together is criminal. The door openings, in particular, are far too large for the doors so the result is a rather crude fit. This may be substantiated by the fact that a veritable lake forms in the car after each light rain!

The thickness of both the body paint and the chrome plating is giving me a lot of trouble. Perhaps I had better say the LACK of thickness of these items! If the car becomes wet rust begins to appear at numerous places, particularly those that are hard to get at. The only cure for this, outside of a paint job, is to polish the rust scale off then wax the areas. This seems to work to a certain degree—until the car gets wet again.

Now for the mechanical gripes. There is a lack of positive caster in the front end and this, together with the 24 lb. super-soft tires, causes the car to require constant steering correction. Loud squealing accompanies each turn regardless of whether they are sharp or gradual nor does reduced speed lessen this.

The quality of steel in the body must be pretty poor because anything heavier than a damp washrag coming in contact with the doors or fenders results in a dent.

The windows don't open or close as they should. They practically fall down by themselves but they require brute strength to raise.

The weight distribution must be terrible. I ran into a light snow in New Mexico last winter and had the greatest difficulty in keeping the car headed in the proper direction despite the very low speed at which I was forced to travel. This difficulty, I don't believe, can be blamed on the trials and tribulations of American mass production.

Next time I'm in the market for a car I'll be more discriminating than I was when I purchased this one. If Detroit hasn't gotten on the ball by the time I'm through with this automobile (which won't be long) then I'm going to take a crack at a foreign product.

R. W. Mansolf *San Francisco, Calif.*

There you are, Detroit, are you going to let your customers talk about you this way? Or are you going to repent and get down to the business of building cars again? Perhaps you've spent too much time building nonsensical "Sporty Cars" and consequently let the production lines run away with themselves with obvious results.

If Detroit would like to reply to the three readers whose letters are reprinted above, we'd be more than happy to play the part of the go-between. How about it?

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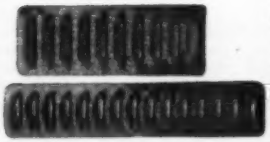

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Part VI of . . .

TEN STEPS TO CUSTOMIZING

takes us up to the priming stage.

By Orin Tramz

PREVIOUS installments of The Ten Steps To Customizing, presented to you in chronological order, have been gradually working up to the actual painting of the car. Since painting and the finishing of a car is one of the most misunderstood operations, we shall try to clarify, as much as possible, the many processes as we proceed. Perhaps this will enable the reader to understand why the price of a good paint job is as high as it is when it is left completely up to a top notch painter to complete the job. There are, unfortunately, many pros and cons on this subject. One can receive widely separated opinions on this subject since every painter has his favorite brand of paint and the methods of application do vary.

One very important point to bear in mind applies to painting in all parts of the country. That is, temperature changes vary considerably from one time of the day to another so plan your painting accordingly and get the specifications for your particular job. The big point is this: have a clean, well lighted shop or garage in which to work. Make certain that it is as dust free as possible. *Dust free* not only during the spraying step but *dust free* for several hours afterwards. In the case of enamel, dust will adhere to the still wet surface for a considerable length of time after you have hung up the spray gun. One method of eliminating the dust problem to a certain extent is to hose down, not only the inside of the shop, but the area immediately outside the doors and other entranceways. Another important point to bear in mind is this: paints, and component thinners, are *very* inflammable substances so be very, careful when handling or storing these volatile items.

Before the painting job can be undertaken it is necessary to have on hand a few simple gadgets to facilitate the handling and mixing of paint. The average large tomato or juice can holds about a quart or a quart and a half of liquid. With all the jagged or rough edges removed, these cans make ideal vessels for storing or mixing primer or colors. Buy a small funnel to assist in pouring paint but remember that all paints should be strained

It is advisable to prime entire car in case of extensive metal work as on the example above.

to eliminate the lumps and other defective particles that are continually present regardless of the brand name of the mixture. These may be eliminated, to a certain extent, by pouring the paint from one can to another through an old silk stocking but better results may be had by using a proper strainer which are available for a cent or two apiece.

If you rent a spray gun from a tool-merchant be sure that it is thoroughly cleaned of all old, dried paint and that the moving parts are lightly oiled. As in the other preceding phases of customizing, careful preparation aids considerably in attaining good results.

Whether you buy, rent or borrow a spray gun be sure to also get full information on its operation. If the particular person seems to be hazy on a few details of the care and handling of the gun then go to your nearest body shop and talk to the painter. He will be glad to show you the right way to use the instrument. Before actually starting to paint your car, whether it be with primer or the finish color, get the "feel" of the gun by practicing on an old fender or door panel that you should have laying around somewhere. Just don't shoot paint all over the panel when practicing, move the gun back and forth in straight, even lines and don't be afraid to check the adjustments of the flow and spray patterns.

If you have been religiously following the various phases of customizing as we have laid them out for you, and, in particular, the last installment which dealt with the preparation of metal for priming, then you should be all set to go ahead. The decision of whether to use lacquer or enamel primer or the final color should be left strictly up to the individual. Lacquer, which is the more expensive, has a richer look, when rubbed out to a mirror-like gloss, but enamel requires about one fourth of the upkeep, is easier to apply, and will not fade in a matter of months. The decision, again, should be left to the dictates of the pocketbook to a certain extent. However, check with your local painter to get the full information on both of the methods.

Assuming that you now have the car cleaned, sanded and masked off, you are ready for priming. If you are using lacquer primer, black, grey or red oxide, mix the paint in the large tomato can cutting the concentrate approximately 50 to 70 percent with a good grade of thinner. This is necessary for most primers come in a state of heavy concentrate or about the consistency of thick syrup, and to be sprayed must be thinned. Strain the mixture into the container (usually one quart in capacity) of the gun. Next, check the size of the spray fan on a test panel, *not* on your readied car.

For best results, the surface to be sprayed must be cleaned of all dirt as has been stressed so highly in the past. Just before spraying, then, a good going over with a commercial type of tack rag is definitely in order. This cloth will free the area of whatever dust and lint may have accumulated while you had your back turned. Now, holding the gun approximately eight to ten inches away from

First sanding of primered area is best done with coarse paper on sanding block. Heavy paper cuts quickly while block aids in smoothing roughness. Water sanding with finer paper is the next step.

the work, and at right angles to it, spray away.

The first coat should be laid on very wet, but be careful not to let large runs occur. The first coat is all-important, particularly over bare metal, for this serves as the bond between the metal and all succeeding coats. A poorly laid first coat will eventually result in chipping, peeling or cracking. Be sure the gun has a moisture trap between it and the compressor tank. These traps must be bled occasionally to drain the system of water which is always present with compressed air. Water and paint don't mix and the result could be bubbles in the finish of the car. Use about 45 pounds of pressure on the line to the gun on the non-pressurized type and about 30 on the pressure type.

The smaller portable guns generally are the pressure type guns utilizing a small volume of air in the paint chamber to force the paint through the nozzle. The non-pressure guns have a small bleed hole in the top of the chamber which must be kept open at all times to compensate for the drop of the paint level in the can.

Allow the first coat to thoroughly dry for several hours. It is not advisable to spray the car in direct sunlight if the weather is particularly hot, for the result will be bubbles in the surface caused by the too-quick drying of the paint. Nor should you roll the car into the sunlight, after the paint is applied, for the same reason.

If you have applied too much primer in certain areas, don't be too concerned with small runs or sags. They may be taken care of by wiping them away with a rag or with your finger. Successive coats of primer will take care of the irregularities.

After the first coat has become quite dry, carefully check the entire car for minor defects. Any deep file scratches, minor dents or depressions will become readily apparent and these may be taken care of by wiping them with a good grade of body putty and a bladed knife. Don't blindly lay on coat after coat of primer for this will get you nowhere and cause a considerable loss of time.

As soon as the first coat has become thoroughly dry, go over the car again with a second coat being careful that it is not applied as heavily as the first coat. The spraying should be done with smooth even strokes of the gun, releasing the pressure at the end of each stroke to reduce the overlap. Top notch painters allow even a longer drying time for the second coat than for the first since it has a tendency to soften the first coat.

If the metal work is at all wavy even though a considerable amount of glazing putty has been applied, it will be necessary to block sand the area to attain a smooth finish. Block sanding with "dry" sandpaper, as was covered in the last chapter, frees the surface of depression and hollows and is accomplished by using #80 paper folded over a small wooden or rubber block. If you are still doubtful of the area, block it two or three times, applying primer in between the sanding operations.

Finish off the succeeding coats with #320 "wet-or-dry" paper using a continual flow of water supplied by a hose or a sponge to eliminate the possibility of the sandpaper grit becoming clogged with the particles of paint. Wet sanding also speeds the sanding operation, a fact which, no doubt, will be happily received. If the paper does become clogged despite the use of water, change paper to prevent the surface from becoming deeply scratched or otherwise damaged.

It is a popular misconception that all of the old paint on a car must be removed before a new color can be applied. If the base paint is not cracked, chipped or peeling and if the car hasn't had 15 colors applied since manufacture, the base is usually satisfactory for reconditioning. If the car is to be completely primed, be certain that all the metal-worked areas have been feather-edged as was explained last month.

In many cases when the car's original paint is "hairlined" and cracked it is advisable to break the surface of the paint with a coarse grade of sandpaper. Then, spray on a few coats of an oil-seal primer. This synthetic primer forms a new base and eliminates all the small pinholes, cracks, etc., on the finish

coat. Nearly all of the leading paint manufacturers make or handle the product mentioned and it can be purchased at a reasonable price. It is not advisable to use a lacquer base primer if the foregoing conditions exist for this tends to aggravate the condition rather than to cure it.

If the weather is cold and rainy the lacquer primers tend to "blush", that is, whiten. Try to do your spraying in a warm area as well as one that is well ventilated and well lighted. Observe the stringent fire laws which are prevalent in most areas. Never paint where any exposed flame or electric heater is operating or where unguarded electric lights are burning. A concentration of vapor and fumes is to be avoided. Use a commercial mask while spraying in a closed area for your own protection.

If you, like most of us, are desirous of saving a few bucks, many shops will spray your car for you after you have prepared it. That is, sand and mask the car and ready it for painting as has been previously discussed. Some rural enthusiasts do not have access to proper painting equipment so we would recommend this procedure in those particular areas.

The usual price for a prime job will run in the neighborhood of $18.00 to $20.00 including material. Some shops will also give your car the finish color coats for $25.00 to $35.00 providing you have gotten it completely ready for shooting. This is a good idea if one is at all doubtful of his capabilities. It has the advantage of providing first-class labor and equipment for a reasonable fee.

Many dyed-in-the-wool custom enthusiasts like to drive their car in a completely primed state. If your taste is so inclined, a variety of colors can be obtained by tinting the light primers with various shades of lacquers. Black or red oxide primer looks quite handsome on a car with a moderate amount of chrome. Red oxide can be darkened or lightened to various pleasing shades. White primer can be brought to nearly any color of the rainbow simply by pouring in a small amount of the shade desired. If one becomes tired or bored with the result, after a few months, no harm done, a little elbow grease, sandpaper, masking tape and more primer will considerably change the looks of your car.

Any aluminum panels should be processed with zinc chromate primer before painting. If the area is small, be sure to cover all adjacent surfaces with a suitable protective layer of paper or cloth to prevent the chromate from settling on the rest of the paint job or upholstery. This is a must for the dust from this primer is particularly difficult to remove once it has settled. This is also true of most synthetic enamel primers and paints since the globules remain in suspension and will float and adhere to any unprotected surface.

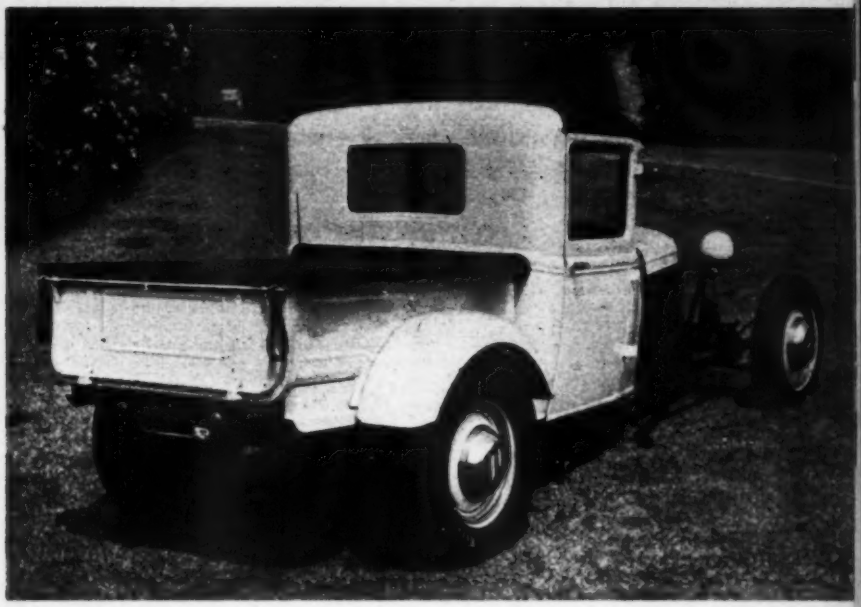
Next month we'll continue with the series on painting. Particular attention is being paid to this phase for it is probably the most important step in customizing. Paint will not hide the sins of the metal man and it is for this very reason that precautionary measures are taken at this stage of the game.

Primer is best applied with gun held from ten to twelve inches from the surface. Gun should be moved in consecutive horizontal strokes to insure an even, continuous layer of surfacer.

From Rags to Riches

is the story of this revitalized produce truck.

Photos by Poole



Terrific downhill rake of A pickup is due to large rear tires, suicide front end. Color of car, which was built in ten months, is green.

IT IS ALWAYS interesting to us how the enthusiasts we come in contact with restore the bodies of their rods to such beautiful condition. The popular '27 T bodies are now over 26 years old while the last A rolled off of the assembly line some 23 years ago. Very, very rare are the stock cars of that vintage that can claim a body free from dents and with metal panels not rusted through either along the bottom of the doors or at the base line of the quarter panels. The owners of such cars, being meticulous in their care, have such a love for their autos that it is extremely difficult to talk them into selling. If they will sell, the asking price is usually far beyond the resources of the average hot rodder who has in mind using the body only on the rod of his dreams. Therefore, most rod bodies are salvaged from wrecking yards in a sad state of disrepair or from behind a farmer's barn.

Bill Walker had these facts well in mind when he decided to build a car. He had looked too long for a body in reasonable condition and realized that for the cash he had he would be lucky to buy anything worth salvaging. One fine day, however, when he was in a service station close to his home, he noticed a decrepit looking auto of doubtful vintage apparently rusting away to nothing amidst a large growth of weeds. Upon inquiring, he found out that the machine, which had served its original owner for many faithful years but had recently been retired from service, was, indeed, for sale. Moreover, the asking price was only $30.00. Buy it? You bet he did without even thinking twice or taking a second look at it. When he had succeeded in wrestling the car home to his garage, he discovered that he was the owner of a slightly used, 23 year old, produce truck.

It is easy to imagine the state that this car was in. Who wouldn't be tired after over 20 years of carrying cabbages, apples and the like? Determined to make something out of his windfall, Bill gritted his teeth and set to the harrowing work.

The pile of discarded parts began to grew as the owner worked. Off came the hood, radiator, doors, pickup bed, body, wheels, etc. Out came the engine, transmission, rear end, front end, and so forth. Before long the once proud little truck was reduced to just a bare skeleton.

About this time someone who was in the market for an A engine and transmission happened along and it didn't require much urging on his part to have Bill unload the old four-barrel on him. The sale amounted to $15.00, thus halving Bill's original investment in his rod-to-be.

Looking over the sizeable pile of discarded parts, it struck Bill that it would be wise to

Front spring is secured to an adjustable angle plate bolted to front of frame. Front end is comprised of all A parts excepting '41 brakes.

Tremendous header can be uncapped for dragging. Dual carbs will be added in near future. All of the chassis parts were painted black.

use as many items as possible thus saving considerable expense. Virtually every usable piece was reinstalled on the car excepting, of course, the original power plant.

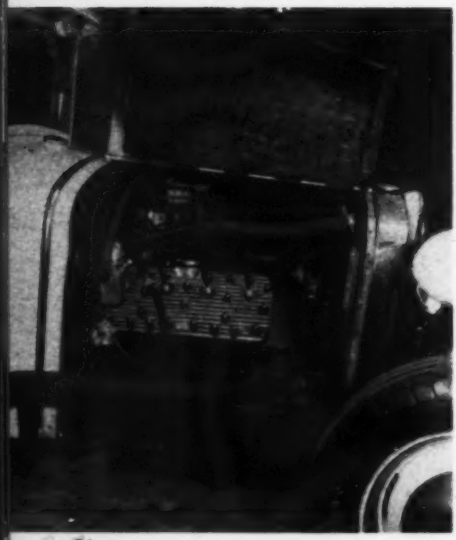
Taking advantage of his auto shop course in school Bill, with the help of his instructor friend Paul Bultman, made a variety of brackets, mounting pads, supports and the gussets so necessary to the trade when installing a V8 engine in an A and when channeling a body. Anyone who has undertaken such a project will attest to this fact.

When channeling a body it is, of course, necessary to remove the flooring from the car and reinstall it in a higher position. This done, the body was positioned on the chassis and the whole works towed down to the Wayne Cook Automotive Co., in Los Angeles, where the body and the pickup bed received a complete rejuvenating, $34.00 worth, including a Sea Foam Green paint job. Total investment to date — $49.00.

Next came the most expensive part of the building operation, that of purchasing and installing a 59 A block engine. Even with the extremely light weight body, Bill decided to go through the engine and make a few changes here and there.

The cylinders were bored out to Mercury size, the block was both ported and relieved, a Howard M8 cam was installed then, to complete the project, Wiand heads were pur-

Beautiful interior is of pleated and rolled, red and white Naugahyde upholstery. The floor carpeting was done in a harmonizing red shade.



Four-jug manifold with "fuel" carbs is used for drags only. Also used for racing are the seat-mounted tank and the pressure pump in center.

chased along with a Lincoln Zephyr ignition system and the whole works assembled and mounted in the rod.

With a total displacement of 239 cubic inches, the little car has enough punch to run away and hide from the majority of the cars it comes up against.

The next step toward completion of the car involved the reupholstering phase. Out came the original, worn upholstery. Only *worn* you say? What there was of it was worn, that is. In many places there was no upholstery at all and the seat springs were visible in quite a few spots. Wanting nothing but the best material and workmanship available in the car, Bill left the job in the hands of a capable upholsterer in Los Angeles. Because the body had been channeled, it was necessary to reconstruct the seat frames and, when this was done, cover them with two tone, red and white, pleated and rolled Naugahyde. The headliner and body sides were done in the same manner and a dark red carpet was made to present a contrasting appearance.

As soon as the interior was completed a tarpaulin of green canvas was made to cover the pickup bed and a matching covering for the insert on top of the cab.

Chroming was kept to a minimum, because of the expense involved, but those items that were plated were restricted to interior pieces such as, the window frames, etc.

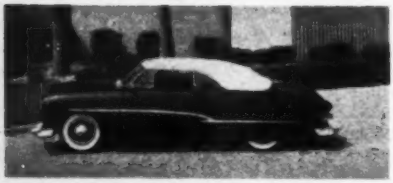
To prove the worth of his machine, Bill recently subjected the car to the hazards involved in a 700 mile trip to Yosemite National Park. Loaded down with enough camping equipment to last a week, the car transported the owner and a friend through the mountainous territory involved. Anyone who has been to the park will agree that the stamina of many a Detroit machine has reeled under the strain. Bill's A buzzed through the ordeal with flying colors encountering no trouble whatsoever.

Now that the ten month project has reached completion, Bill wants to sell the car and start on something else. Anyone interested in contacting him may do so by writing or calling to him at 507 N. Kings Road, Los Angeles, Calif.

Left side of hood top is cut out for generator. Neat appearance of the pickup is due to careful workmanship on part of owner-builder Walker. Tarpaulin over bed and top insert are of green.

BARRIS KORNER

Prior to final installation, sample stripping is placed over chalked layout & secured with tape.



Chrome trim on DeWitt's '50 Ford matches overall styling of car, duplicates shape of padded top.

The tapering Buick chrome installed on Marshall's '50 Mercury is protective as well as ornamental.

BEFORE STARTING off this month it might be well to explain that what we will refer to as chrome stripping is, in reality, not that at all. The stripping, or moldings, used on most late model cars is actually highly polished stainless steel. However, for the sake of simplicity we shall herewith refer to it merely as chrome.

Chrome stripping can play a very important part in the designing or restyling of a domestic type automobile. More harm than good can result from the total absence of chrome trim on a car having flat sided body panels. The stripping serves to break up the appearance of large expanses of metal and, at the same time, can add apparent length to a car.

For our first example let's look at Chuck DeWitt's 1950 Ford convertible pictured on this page. The strip that runs the length of the front fender and door is the now-famous spear molding of the '51 Buick. Extending for a few inches along the forward end of the quarter panel it joins a horizontal fender strip taken from a '52 Oldsmobile. A bit of imagination will reveal that without the combination of stripping this car would lose its apparent length and cease to be as sleek looking as it is.

It is very important to have a certain meaning to trim design. When one sees DeWitt's car for the first time the eye naturally tends to take in the stripping as being part of the restyling. Notice that the rearward tapering sweep of the Buick spear matches the general outline of the top of the car. That is proportioning in the true sense of the word.

As soon as the 1953 Pontiacs made their appearance we felt that their side stripping could be put to good use on another make automobile. The car we had in mind was the Mercury convertible owned by Bob Lund. By turning the Pontiac strip over, we succeeded in matching the Mercury's famed dip in the door — a sore point stylewise since its inception in the 1949 models.

It might also be noted in the same example that general appearance effects of the new side chrome is overshadowed by the fact that it plays a functional role as well. That is, to protect the body from nicks and dents caused by the careless motorists who love to swing their doors open wide after having parked in a space bounded on either side by a nice, shiny automobile.

The third example is Dale Marshall's '50 Merc club coupe. The original Mercury stripping was discarded in favor of '47 Buick trim. While the Merc chrome was more or less flat in cross sectional appearance, the Buick strip is V-shaped. It tapers, too, as it

extends rearward enhancing the apparent length as well.

The desire of many enthusiasts to alter the chrome stripping on their cars has led to much confusion and resulting bad taste of design. This is due to the fact that while chrome plays a dual role on a car, it must be chosen to match the general styling lines of the same car. Extremely narrow stripping would not blend in with the overall looks of a wide car nor would wide chrome help the appearance of a smaller car since it would cause it to appear quite cumbersome.

It was felt that the popular Buick spear chrome would not harmonize with the lines of a '49 Oldsmobile convertible because of the steeply swooping downward curve that it presented. Therefore, by reworking the strip and lessening its downward curve, the desired result of simplicity and matched lines was obtained. Too, it achieved the effect of apparent lowness of the car whereas it actually has more than adequate ground clearance.

The Barris Kustom Auto Accessories of Hollywood has available various lengths of straight or curved moldings which can be used on practically any make or model of automobile. These can be cut where desired to fit two-door or four-door cars. An accompanying illustration shows an installation of this chrome stripping on a '53 Ford. The owner has positioned the chrome at a location approximately two-thirds of the distance between the bottom of the body and the lower window line. The strips as sold by the company are symmetrical in that they have identically shaped tips at either end.

The curved moldings, of the same type but which are curved, as sold by us can be used as rear fender crown moldings or as hood strips to cover the seam between panels.

The installation of chrome strips, once the style has been decided upon, is reasonably simple. Following the original design laid out on paper or on a photograph of the car, the stripping should be affixed to the body through the use of masking tape. Holes for mounting should not be drilled until the exact location has been decided upon. With the use of tape it is a simple matter to relocate or discard entirely various styles of chrome strips in favor of something which, in your estimation, is a little more suitable and in keeping with the overall appearance of the car.

It should be stressed that while the lack of stripping will detract from the overall finished appearance of a restyled car, care should be exercised in the final decision of the moldings. Also, over-gaudiness will detract from the inherently good design of the American automobile.

Barris Kustom Auto Accessories of Hollywood is making available the stripping on this '53 Ford.

Single line of stripping serves to break up the otherwise broad expanse of metal on this Olds.

Reversed '53 Pontiac side trim on this late Merc suits perfectly the contour line dip of the door.

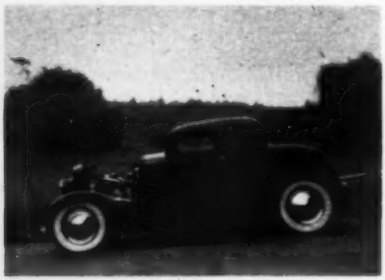
our readers' customs...

CANADIAN CABRIOLET

Thought I'd drop you a line or two and a photo of my '41 Mercury convertible. The hood and deck have been shaved and the hood now has two full length airscoops. Taillights are '40 Cadillac and the headlights are '53 Studebaker.

The engine is stock at present except for dual exhausts. All of the work, except the blue paint job and matching upholstery, was done by myself.

Pete Amass — Montreal, Quebec



READER'S ROD

First, a grateful word to you folks. I enjoyed your article on the Washington Rod and Custom, particularly because both of the cars came from near my home and because I am glad to see a couple of Northwestern cars getting the recognition they deserve. For some reason, cars from that area seem to go unnoticed which is a shame — they really have some fine machines up there.

Enclosed please find a car that a friend of mine and I built recently. Soon after it was finished, though, I had to sell it because I entered the Navy. Wonder if it is still around Seattle?

Bob Watson — Pensacola, Fla.

• *That's a fine looking bomb, Bob.*

CAD-FORD COMBO

I've been reading R & C for some time now and enjoy it very much. I really like to look at the custom cars that you feature for I am an avid custom fan.

Please find a photo of my car enclosed. It is a '46 Mercury that I have just finished reworking. The grille is from a '49 Cadillac with '53 Ford parking lights. The headlights have been frenched.

The front fenders were extended 2" in front to fit the grille and the hood and trunk lid have been molded. The interior is finished in black and red upholstery to contrast with the black exterior paint job.

The engine is a '48 Merc. with a ¾ cam, ported and relieved and with Lincoln valve springs.

Tony Piccinto — Vaux Hall, New Jersey

• *Looks fine, Tony, and reflects a lot of careful workmanship.*

INDIANA ALTERATION

I have been able to get two issues of R & C and I think it is a wonderful, helpful little magazine.

I have a '49 Ford on which I have put Olds taillights. The hood and deck lid have been dechromed and the trunk is now electrically operated. My father and I made the rear fender skirts from sheet stock.

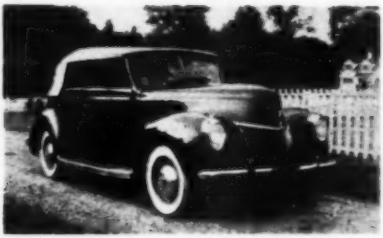
Lowell Metz — Shelbyville, Indiana

BEFORE AND AFTER — HAWAIIAN VARIETY

I am enclosing two photos of my '40 Chevy coupe — one taken before a friend of mine and I worked it over and one taken after.

The car was originally a business coupe but we have moved the gas tank into the trunk and installed a rear seat making it a five passenger coupe. Most of the chrome was removed from the body and the parking lights taken from the fenders. We removed the running boards and the exposed area of the chassis is hidden by the addition of a section of metal welded to the body. The color of the car is metallic green which represents 12 coats of lacquer. I might add that *all* of the work on the car was done by my friend and myself and neither of us had had any previous experience along these lines.

Jack Terhune Pearl Harbor, Hawaii



"TEN STEPS . . ." READER'S CUSTOM

Enclosed please find a snapshot of my '39 Ford convertible sedan. The sides and front of the hood are filled and a chrome strip covers the top seam.

The engine, 59AB, is stock right now but I plan to install a good set of heads and add dual exhausts in the near future. My plans also call for Zephyr gears in the transmission. Since I bought the car, about a year ago, I have spent most of my spare time bringing the car back to its original condition, especially as far as the chassis and engine are concerned.

I particularly enjoy your "Ten Steps To Customizing".

Howard Rooney, Jr. Alexandria, Virginia

FOR SALE — ONE CUSTOM

Here are a couple of pictures of my 1947 Plymouth convertible. I have taken every other bar out of the grille, leaded in the nose and the deck lid and put on Henry J taillights. The fender skirts are chopped Mercury skirts, the car has been lowered two inches in the rear. The engine is a '42 Dodge bored .090" over stock and fitted with Kaiser pistons. The pistons, rods and crankshaft are balanced. The cam is an Iskenderian and is full race. The ports are polished, the valve springs are '52 and the head has been milled. The compression ratio is close to 8-1. The flywheel has been chopped and a heavy duty clutch is used. Twin Plymouth carburetors are mounted on a Clark manifold. Dual exhausts feature both Mitchell and Huth glasspacked mufflers.

The upholstery is original but the seats are fitted with tailor-made seat covers. Color of the car is jet black enamel. I have put $1100 worth of work alone into the car and want only $1800 for it. Any takers?

Arden Heggem 5258 Range View Ave. Los Angeles 42, Calif.

• *Sounds like a reasonable price, Arden, anyone interested?*

BITTERSWEET BOMB

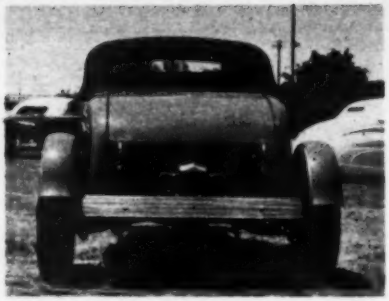
(Continued from Page 39)

again, to the exterior appearance of the now nearly finished rod. The chrome windshield frame from a junked '37 Ford was chopped and modified until it fit the '29 cowl.

Not finding any Ford steering wheels to his liking, Eugene turned to the Chrysler line of cars and came up with a Dodge wheel.

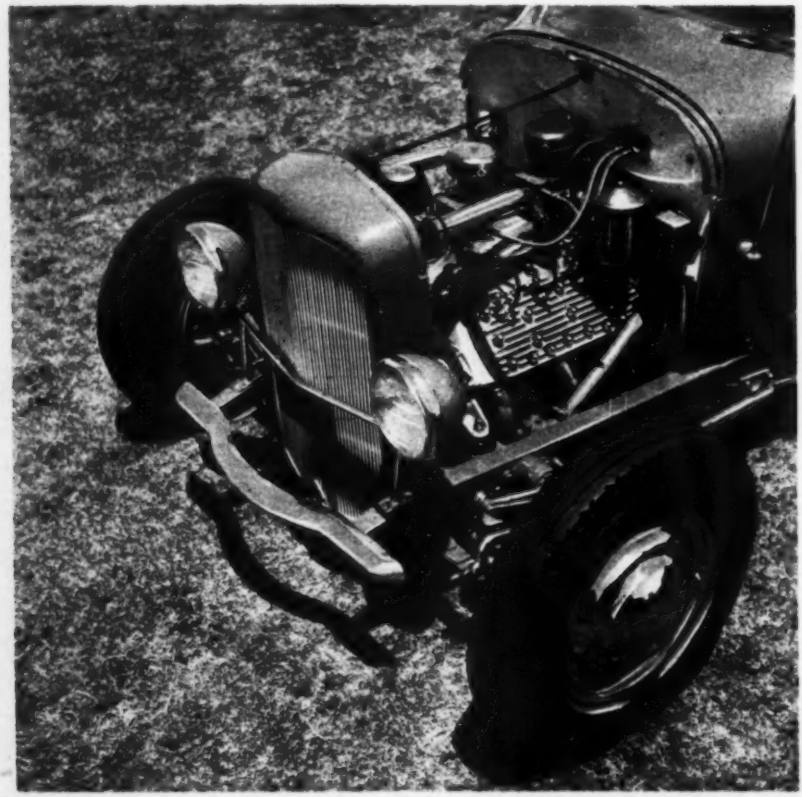
The exterior of the car was further dressed up by the addition of '37 DeSoto bumpers, slightly narrowed, and circular Pontiac taillights. At this time it was decided that a trip to the upholsterers was due.

Because Northern California is, periodically, subjected to inclement weather, Eugene foresaw the need for a top, so one was built, padded and covered with black canvas. Interior trim is a combination of brown and white leatherette.



Pontiac taillights are set just below the outer trunk latches. Lacquer paint job is Bittersweet.

59A block is ported, relieved and bored. Visible accessories have all been chrome plated. Speed of car four years ago was slightly over 119 mph.



Not as functional on a street roadster as on a track car, nerfing bars protect the rear tires.

Interior view reveals 1930 Buick dashboard and instruments. The steering wheel is from a Dodge.

Back to the garage once again for the finishing touch which, in this case, was the paint job. A little considering was necessary before those concerned came up with the decision to paint the car what is appropriately known as "Bittersweet".

The owner has recently become a member of the Modesto, Calif., "Century Toppers" auto club and, together with his fine running rod, can almost always be seen at the club's many events.

Technical Tips

'32 CHEVY ALTERATIONS

I am planning on doing quite a bit of work to my '32 Chevy. The way it is now, it sputters and pops and nearly dies out when starting off. Will dual carburetors, split exhaust, manifold and a milled head give it a little more pep? How about with just the dual carbs and split exhaust?

A friend says that my Chevy is geared too low. I would like to know if this is true and if it is possible to obtain a higher ratio.

I am just sixteen and am trying to save my money for insurance on my car so I do not have much cash to put into the car itself.

Frank Martin — Decoto, Calif.

• *If your car acts as you say, then you had better check your ignition timing and the carburetor, sounds as though one or both items may need some attention.*

The addition of the items you mentioned would give your car a needed shot in the arm and should help performance a considerable amount.

The rear end gears were engineered to provide the car with what the designers hoped would be the best all around performance. You neglected to mention your present gear ratio but it should be possible to obtain a set of higher gears. Suggest you check with your local Chevrolet dealer. — *Tech. Ed.*

DOOR SWITCHES

I noticed in the June issue of R & C that the '47 Ford on page 17 has key locked pushbuttons to operate the door solenoids. I've been trying to get ahold of buttons like these but can't seem to find any. I wonder if you could inform me as to where these particular buttons may be obtained.

Carl Decker — Denver, Colo.

• *Buttons of this type of various sizes can generally be obtained from a burglar alarm company. If not, try any good, large auto parts store.* — *Tech. Ed.*

SECTIONING ENTHUSIAST

Thanks for doing such a fine job with your magazine, I buy it every month. I have been following The Ten Steps To Customizing and found, in the third step, something that is not exactly clear to me.

Your illustration shows a suggested manner in which a door can be sectioned. Instead of butting the edges of metal together, you suggest bending a lip inward on the upper and lower halves of the door, then welding the lips together. This is fine, but as I am in the process of sectioning my '49 Chevy two door I would like to find out how you expect to close the door, since the bent-in lip would contact the edge of the door post and keep it from closing all the way. Hope you will find space in your magazine to clear this up so that I can continue with my sectioning job.

Jack McCann — San Francisco, Calif.

• *The annoying lip that prevents you from closing the doors on your car can be quite neatly eliminated by removing it with a pair of tin snips. The lip-less, one inch section can then be brazed or welded together.*

. . . AGAIN

I have a '50 Ford two door which I am planning on sectioning. I have been preparing for the job by rounding up the necessary equipment as was suggested in your series of articles on restyling. Now, I am ready to go ahead — almost! What is a "hand panel cutter" and where can one be purchased. I've tried all the auto parts stores around here and can't seem to find anyone who even heard of such a thing.

Would I be able to cut my Ford in half with a saw attachment than can be attached to an electric drill motor?

Edward Heaney — Colma, Calif.

• *The hand panel cutter referred to is also called a "channel cutter". Believe that the Proto Tool Co. has several sizes available but one can be made from a short section of a spring leaf. Merely grind one end of the leaf so that it has a hook-like point. It is started by driving the pointed edge into the metal, then simply following the course desired, straight, curved or what have you. (See illustration.)*

The electric saw attachment works equally well.

(*Continued on page 66*)

RESTYLED and RED

(Continued from page 19)

it was necessary to reshape the tips.

With the majority of the exterior metal work being done, the car was sent to the Carson Top Shop in Los Angeles for a thorough going over. Among other things, this meant the building, and padding, of a new top to conform to the recently reduced height of the windshield.

The seats, door panels and the interior of the top were upholstered in Royal Blue and Eggshell White leatherette. The dash was also covered, later, with similarly blue leatherette. The interior was completed with the chrome plating of the window moldings and the various dashboard accessories.

Wisely deciding against a radical lowering job, Dick settled for a 3" drop in front and a 4" drop in the rear which, with the addition of 15" wheels, brings the car close enough to the ground for all practical purposes but still maintains adequate ground clearance — an oft-neglected feature.

The appearance of the car was completed with the spraying of a 12 coat lacquer job. The result is an unusual shade of red attained by mixing quantities of Mercury Bittersweet with Cadillac Aztec Red.

With enough modification to satisfy the wants of the average custom enthusiast, Dick decided it still wasn't enough for him and started to work on the engine.

To begin with, the block is part of the car's original equipment but has a few additions here and there. The heads and dual manifold are Weiand and the latter supports two Stromberg 97's. Ignition is provided by Harmon and Collins while the cam is a Smith 260.

The barrels were bored to 3 5/16", the stroke increased to 4" and the block ported and relieved. The weight of the flywheel was reduced to 23 lbs., Jahns 3-ring pistons were installed and the valves, equipped with heavier, Zephyr springs, were reworked to have a 30° seat. Then, the whole works was electronically balanced and, when it was finally ready to run, headers were mounted in place with "lakes plugs" just ahead of the dual, stock mufflers.

With the 3880 lb. car completed and with a Columbia overdrive rear end installed (which, incidentally, was constructed from the parts of 3 other similar, junked units) it went out and surprised everyone concerned with a not-too-bad speed of 84 mph at the Santa Ana drag strip using ordinary gas.

And, thus, as we leave Bellflower, Calif., in our constant search for unusual and interesting cars, we must say farewell to Dick Gnadt and his singularly treated car, thanking him for bringing it to our attention.

NEXT MONTH

Read . . .

- **What Became of the Model T?**
- **How To Build a Streamliner In Three Days.**

WANTS TO ALTER HIS '37

I have a 1937 Ford 4 door sedan that I would like to customize without too great an expense.

How would '46 Chrysler taillights look if they were properly leaded in? I haven't seen a '37 with these type of lights installed but imagine they would look very nice.

How about some articles — preferably step by step — on interior customizing?

Your magazine is a great favorite around here, hope you keep up the good work.

Chuck Meyer — Missoula, Montana

• *Whether Chrysler taillights would fit in with the design of your car is strictly up to you. Chances are they would favorably alter the rear appearance of your car provided that a good job of installation was done.*

The November issue of R & C featured an article on the constructing of glamorous plastic knobs for a dashboard. From time to time we will continue to cover the phases of interior restyling. — *Tech. Ed.*

FORD 6 HOP UP

I have a '49 Ford, 6 cylinder, with overdrive. I would like to rework the engine a little for it seems to have terrific possibilities. Could you possibly tell me who makes speed equipment for this engine and where I could obtain a catalogue of the parts available?

Carl Shaffer — St. Joseph, Ill.

• *Try Nicson Engineering Co., 4546 E. Washington Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif.*

NEWLY INTERESTED READER

At the present time I am in the Navy but expect to get discharged in about five months. I recently acquired a '39 Ford convertible and would like to fix it up a little but don't know how or where to begin. Can you help me? I would also like to install a hydraulic brake system.

I have only recently become interested in cars. I accidentally picked up a copy of R & C and since that time I haven't missed an issue. So far, the magazine is tops and I've already learned a lot. If you could give me some advice on my car or tell me where to obtain some information I would be greatly appreciative.

Bob Knapp — FPO New York City, N.Y.

• *From time to time R & C has featured several '39 Fords that have been subjected to a great amount of rework. Maybe you could get some ideas by referring to them.*

The hydraulic brakes from a '41 or later Ford can be used on your car with little difficulty. No machining will be necessary — just switching of parts. — *Tech. Ed.*

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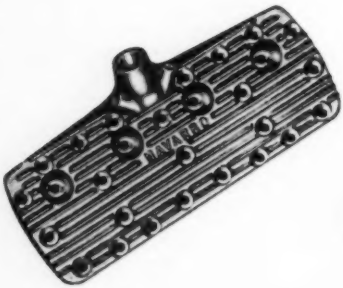

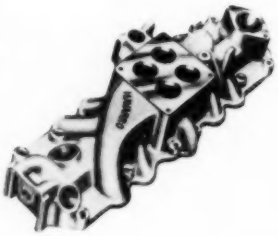

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